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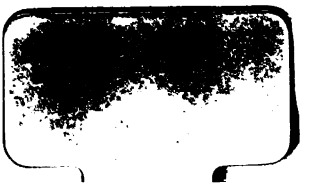
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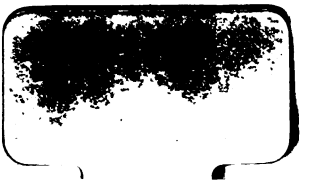
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ART OF JUDGING INDIVIDUALS BY THEIR HANDWRITING

600076366Y




600076366Y



FRONTISPIECE.

1. I should say that Dryburgh abbey
Anna Latitia Barbauld.

2. Elizabeth Carter. 3. obliged Lewt
Jan: 17 3 8/9 H. Chapone

4. Hannah Cowley 5. M. Evelyn

6. translated from Latin into English.
Elizabeth Elstob 7. Anne Grants
March 28th 1823

8. Deep, quiet Love,
F. Hemans. 9. E Inchbald

10. M. Wortley Montagu 12. S. Siddons
11. Hannah More

13. Agnes Strickland
Queens of England.

THE ART

OF

JUDGING THE CHARACTER

OF

INDIVIDUALS

FROM

THEIR HANDWRITING AND STYLE.

WITH THIRTY-FIVE PLATES,

Containing One Hundred and Twenty Specimens of the Handwriting of various Characters, to illustrate the above Theories.

EDITED BY

EDWARD LUMLEY.

LONDON:

JOHN RUSSELL SMITH,

36, SOHO SQUARE.

MDCCCLXXV.

265. h. 151.

PREFACE.

HAND WRITING is now again exciting some interest in the Literary World. I have therefore determined to offer to the Public a small work upon the subject, which I superintended, and partly printed, some years ago. Having become a believer in the so-called "*obsolete and exploded*" Theories, here explained by different Authors, I have now gathered a marvellous assemblage of most truthfully copied FACSIMILES of the WRITINGS of NOTEWORTHY PEOPLE, of Various AGES and COUNTRIES. Illustrating these SPECIMENS in order to prove the reasonableness and consequent utility, of this mode of TESTING INDI-

VIDUAL CHARACTER, has proved the great amusement of my life, and for this purpose I have collected, from all possible sources, such as MSS., Printed Books, Conversations, &c., Characteristic Notices, Copious Biographies, Anecdotes, Sayings, Personal Descriptions, Portraits, &c. Whether this immense Collection or even only a portion, is ever to be published, will depend mainly upon the reading public. Time can alone prove this. It seems likely that I shall finish in about seven years.*

EDWARD LUMLEY.

* This was written by the late Mr. Lumley about 1865, the volume has remained unpublished till his death. The Publisher knows nothing of the destination of the Collections he made on the subject of Autographs and which are referred to on p. 134, &c.

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THE ART OF

JUDGING THE CHARACTER

BY THE

HANDWRITING.

INTRODUCTION.

NOTHING is so difficult as to understand the being called "man;" to dive into his thoughts, to find out that which, possessing no material existence, cannot be palpable to our senses. We, however, communicate our ideas to each other; and speech, which is the wonderful medium of doing so, has appeared a matter of such difficult invention, that certain great philosophers, unable to explain it, have

looked upon it as a gift of the Deity. But speech is not the only method by which man can make known his thoughts. The different movements which he performs, known by the name of gestures,* taken in the most extended sense, constitute what is called the language of action. When we speak, it is almost always under the influence of volition. It is not the same with gestures, which are frequently involuntary. It is for this reason easier to deceive by speech; while the gesture which escapes us bears the impress of truth. The language of the passions consists chiefly in the movements which accompany speech. It is in gesture that the greatest of orators made eloquence to

* " ——— the hurried tread, the upward eye,
The clenched hand, the pause of agony."
The Corsair.

consist.* A look† is more expressive than the happiest choice of words. Who could persuade us that he loves or hates, if the emotion of his soul were not depicted in his eyes, in the play of his features, and in the movements which agitate it?‡

As the act of touch destroys the illusions of the other senses, so does gesture often correct§ the meaning of the words.

* The allusion is to Demosthenes, who, when asked wherein consisted eloquence, replied, "In *action*."

† "Drink to me only with thine *eyes*,
And I will pledge with mine."

‡ "As the bolt burst on high
From the black cloud that bound it,
Flashed the *soul* of that *eye*
Through the long lashes round it."
Bride of Abydos.

§ The meaning of *redresser* (as opposed to *detruire*) seems to be here, to *perfect*.

In the bitter* smile one recognises irony, and the wavering of the look betrays the timidity which conceals itself under threatening words.

The different signs of our thoughts are so much the more true in proportion as they are more difficult to reproduce; thus the tone of voice is more difficult to imitate than the choice of the words, and the action still more so. That which gives the great superiority to gestures (in the relation with which we are now occupied), is the necessity of a perfect harmony in every movement of the countenance; if a single feature is not in unison with the rest, the deception is instantly detected. It is in vain that the

* "There was a laughing devil in his sneer,
That raised emotions both of rage and fear."
The Corsair.

lips tremble, as in the expression of joy, if the eyes do not sparkle with unwonted lustre; if the brow does not expand so as to efface the cares which furrow it. Since every feature has its language, since it possesses movements appropriate to it, what an amount of practice must be necessary to give to each the same expression, when it is not dictated by actual feeling! If, then, it is so difficult to feign any passion when it does not agitate us, what power* must we not exercise over ourselves, to repress emotions ready to

* "He had the skill, when Cunning's gaze would seek
To probe his heart and watch his changing cheek,
At once the observer's purpose to espy,
And on himself roll back his scrutiny."
The Corsair.

break forth, and to give to our features movements the reverse of the passions which actually govern us! Add to which, that some, being quite beyond the domain of volition, are in no wise within the power of imitation. Thus it is difficult to impose on a careful observer (who can distinguish these various shades of difference), when we wish to feign sentiments we do not feel. But man has not always the intention of either feigning or displaying his feelings; yet even the most indifferent of his actions, being necessarily modified by his character, may, under certain circumstances, serve to be his judge. When man is acting without restraint, may he not shew his vivacity or his dulness, his impetuosity or his caution, his violence or his gentleness, his dexterity or his awkwardness? Generally

speaking, a man who sacrifices* to the graces displays it in every movement. An original† does nothing like other people, and all his movements must bear a particular impress. These are the principal modifications which we generally remark in the movement of men, and which indicate the salient points in

* " —— shaped for sportive tricks,
And made to court an am'rous looking-glass,
And strut before a wanton ambling nymph."
SHAKSPEARE.

† " A man so various, that he seemed to be
Not one, but all mankind's epitome;
Stiff in opinions, always in the wrong,
Was every thing by starts, and nothing long;
But in the course of one revolving moon
Was chymist, fiddler, statesman, and buffoon;
Then all for women, painting, rhyming, drinking,
Besides ten thousand freaks that died in thinking." DRYDEN.

his character. But there are others which may be deduced from the continuation or repetition of an action. Has it certain duration, or is it often repeated? We see that a man who has little perseverance cannot sustain himself in it to the end; herein always lies his defect: we behold the inconstant man changing the manner of the action; the capricious man departing from propriety in it; likewise, even if there be spectators, the man of simplicity behaves as if he were not observed. One may see, therefore, how an attentive observer, gifted with sagacity, can appreciate many features of character in men from even their most indifferent actions. One sees equally by applying these general considerations to the action of a man engaged in writing, that it ought to furnish all the signs which we have

pointed out; and if we consider that it follows the movements of the soul and of the mind, it ought naturally to bear the impress of the passions, and to have relation to the intellectual faculties.

Ecriture de
LOUIS XVI.

Je recomande a mon fils s'il avoit
malheur de devenir Roy, de songer
qu'il se doit tout entier au bonheur
de ses Concitoyens, qu'il doit oublier
toute haine et tout ressentiment, et
nommement tout ce qui a rapport
aux malheurs et aux chagrins que
j'eprouve qu'il ne peut faire le
bonheur des Peuples qu'en regnant
suivant les Loix, mais en meme
temps qu'un Roy ne peut les faire
respecter, et faire le bien qui est dans
son cœur qu'autant qu'il a l'autorité
necessaire,

Ecriture de la Reine
MARIE ANTOINETTE.

ce 16 8bre à 4 h ½ du matin.

c'est à vous, ma Soeur, que j'écris
pour la dernière fois; je viens d'être
condamnée non pas à une mort
honteuse, elle ne l'est que pour
les criminels, mais à aller
rejoindre votre frere; comme lui
innocente j'espère montrer la même
fermeté que lui dans ces derniers
moments. je suis calme comme
on l'est quand la conscience ne
reproche rien; j'ai un profond
regret d'abandonner mes pauvres
enfants; vous savez que je
n'existois que pour eux,

THE ART OF

JUDGING THE CHARACTER

BY THE

HANDWRITING.

When persons write badly and with difficulty, the hand does not follow the thoughts, and the connexion which we have described no longer exists; but one can perceive that a defective education is the cause. A hand little practised, but where education has not been neglected, is easily discovered, by the pains taken in order to write in a middling style; and it is thus that we distinguish in the

world the person who possesses education, and the one who is deficient in it. A fine hand, on the contrary, is often the result of a peculiar education; in such a case it is in harmony with the calling which a person follows, and it generally bears the impress of it. Do we not easily recognise the writing of a merchant, and of many other occupations, in which careful penmanship is a necessary talent? But in these cases, where so much art is displayed, the natural disposition is with difficulty seen through such a medium. Not but that, even in these cases, an experienced eye may trace various shades bearing relation to certain traits of character; but in the following observations we purpose speaking only of those hands for which education has done neither too much nor too little,

which may therefore be considered natural.

It is in general easy to distinguish between the writing of the sexes. If it were customary for women to have a peculiar handwriting — if copies, differing from those used by men, were put before them — the distinction might be considered as something quite independent of the peculiarities which distinguish the sexes; but they use the same copies, are instructed on the same principles, and have the same masters. It is true that women have not the same amount of practice, are not expected to reach the same degree of perfection; but whatever may be the difference thus produced, it is not that which gives a character to the

two styles of writing. There may be a deficiency of practice and of care in the writing of men, but we can always trace a something masculine in the hand which traces it. When woman writes well and easily, are there not some peculiarities by which she may be discovered? Not but that it is possible to be sometimes deceived; but it is the same with the physiognomy: a peculiar character distinguishes it, although in particular instances we may be led into error. Those who suffer themselves to be checked in investigating a subject by certain exceptions, will either form no opinion at all, or be more frequently deceived than those who follow general rules. Do we not see less strength, less firmness, less boldness in the writing of a woman? Not that it is necessary to possess these qualities in a

high degree in order to trace the characters which indicate them. Women might write differently; but they are not naturally disposed to do so. Gifted with less strength, they put forth a less amount; their light hands glide over the paper. Accustomed to watch themselves, reserved in all their actions, their pens do not wander like those of men. To the restraint natural to them is added a delicacy in the formation of the letters, and a gracefulness in the strokes of the pen, which accord perfectly with their usual good taste.

All nations are distinguished from each other by a cast of features peculiar to each. One recognises them by their features, their manner, and their language. Every thing bears the stamp of the na-

tional character. This is equally observed in the case of gestures and in handwriting. The form of the letters may be chosen accidentally, it may be borrowed from other nations; but it is always modified by the people who have adopted it. It is the peculiar character of the nation which produces this modification. Most of the civilised nations of Europe have adopted the same form of letters; but the writing of each has its peculiar characteristics. It is as easy to distinguish an Italian, a Frenchman, or an Englishman by his writing as by his countenance. I shall confine myself to one observation on national penmanship. That of the Italians is remarkable for a peculiar delicacy and pliability. Are not these qualities the ones most characteristic of the nation?

The likeness often traced in members of the same family is as much to be found in their writing. It is less striking, because the countenance, the voice, the language, and the manners, present a greater number of different aspects; but it is not on that account the less real. We might at first perhaps be tempted to attribute this to their having received the same education, having followed the same copies, to their being frequently together, to their having imitated each other; but allowing a certain influence to the education, which must apply principally to the formation of the letters, and to what may be termed the material or mechanical part of the writing, there must always remain certain modifications dependent on the mental qualities of each, and belonging to the moral character. Education, there-

fore, is calculated to increase, not to originate this resemblance. Besides, there are persons of one family, who have been brought up together, in whose writing a difference is scarcely to be distinguished; and there are those who, having been separated, have received a different education, and in whose writing there is the most striking resemblance.

Of all the performances of man, there is not any which identifies the individual more strongly than his manner of writing. Painters and sculptors are recognised by their peculiar touch; but to distinguish an artist by his works requires long practice and a cultivated taste. But what art or experience can be necessary to enable us to recognise a handwriting which we

have only sometimes seen? This so represents the individual, that all nations have united in attributing more importance in law to a man's signature in evidence than to the testimony of any number of witnesses.

The advance of age, which so powerfully modifies our existence—which influences all our actions—must necessarily stamp a peculiar character on our writing. The hand does not become fixed until the period of life when the character is formed. It then acquires the boldness and strength of maturity; and the trembling hand of old age, distinctly different from that of childhood, shews the destructive power of time. An illness in the prime of life may render the hand

unsteady; but if it do not extend its influence to the intellectual and moral faculties, the energy possessed by them is still visible, in spite of the irregular form of the letters themselves.

Every thing which is not orderly is offensive to the eyes of a man endowed with the love of order. This is not caused by his reason, but by his taste. His reason may, it is true, strengthen this inclination, and even appear the cause of it; for is there any thing more conformable to reason than order? The feeling which inclines us to it is strong and constant, and shews itself in almost every circumstance of life. The handwriting is therefore likely to bear the impress of it; it characterises that of the

merchant. Accordingly, whether from instinct or from reason, he would place very little confidence in a clerk whose writing happened to be irregular, although legible. It is not granted to every one to write a regular and well-formed hand. One who is of heedless disposition cannot fix his attention long; another is in too great a hurry, carried away by natural vivacity, or agitated by the emotion of the moment. Some, from that inconstancy which is at the bottom of their character, change frequently the proportions and the distances of their letters; others, from natural disposition, are unable to control the movements of their pen. We see, therefore, that the love of order must be united with several other qualities, in order that the wish to write with regularity may be sustained

and have full effect. A regular hand-writing may present to our view several modifications, of which the most remarkable is uniformity. There are some strokes which must always be the same, because they are essential to the actual formation of the letters; but there are others which may be varied at the pleasure of the writer. When one sees that the form of these latter is invariably the same, and always presents the same proportions, can one refuse to believe that this uniformity is intimately connected with a great evenness of the disposition itself? It is almost useless to add, that this observation is entirely confirmed by experience.

The first quality requisite in writing is legibility. Can any exact and careful man neglect to observe this indispensable

rule? We must do something more than admire order. The eye may be satisfied with the symmetry of the writing; but the mind will not be so, if the rules which prescribe distinctness have not been followed.

A man of trifling disposition will carry the observance of these rules to an excess. He will not omit a dot, a stop, or an accent. This remark is so universally true, that it has given rise to a proverbial expression, in order to describe a person of this character.

We may admire the beautiful without having the power of imitating it; and he who admires and has the skill to imitate, does not always seek to do so. A painter strives to imitate nature accurately, be-

cause beauty of form, composition, and colouring constitute the excellence of his art. The author is equally desirous of depicting his thought well; but his thought is quite independent of the beauty of his writing. For this reason persons often neglect this art; but it is not always attainable by those even who take pains to acquire it. In order to succeed, a certain talent for imitation, a taste, and an aptitude are requisite, with which all are not endowed, and a degree of application and practice which many persons think beyond the worth of the object to be gained. Excellence in this respect is often thought to proceed either from frivolity, which led to this waste of time, or from the necessity of cultivating a talent intended to be used as a profession, or from which the party wishes to

derive profit. Men of letters and of high birth are equally reproached with the opposite fault; we may with truth sometimes suspect them of affectation in this matter, but it is more natural to them than is generally believed. The one class suffer themselves to be carried away too far by their imagination, the other neglect the cultivation of theirs; on the one side too little importance is attached to external forms, on the other side to the accomplishments of the mind. But there is a handwriting which is pleasing without being beautiful; it is not subjected to the rules of art, but has a grace, an elegance, an indescribable charm in the form of the letters, which proves that the writer is not negligent upon this point, that he possesses a taste which is not exclusive, since it extends to comparatively

unimportant matters, and that he has a mind cultivated by a liberal education. When we write for our own eyes only, we write with more carelessness; but the man of good taste never forgets what is due to himself, even when he alone is to judge of his performance; whatever he does, he should be able to approve of it, whether it is to be seen by himself alone or by others. We dress elegantly only when we receive or pay visits; but when we are alone, our dress must not be devoid of taste and neatness. We write with the most care when we address others, and this constant care shews an earnest desire to please. Writing may be more or less ornamental; but in however small a degree, an anxious aiming at ornament is remarkable—affectation, vanity, frivolity, or conceit, become revealed.

Beauty is not always compatible with violent passion. Sorrow withers it, anger disfigures it, the *tender* passions alone can lend it charms. It was for this reason that the ancient sculptors avoided representing those attitudes which pass the bounds of moderation. If a lover who writes to his mistress is agitated by a violent passion for her, he will unwittingly shew it by the irregularity of his handwriting. In his love, and wish to produce a stronger persuasion of the fact, he will produce "a *fine frenzy*"* of strokes by an effect of art; no matter the degree of exaggeration, provided one really loves. But the most passionate letter, if written in a quiet steady hand, would suffice to undeceive (if any thing

* "The poet's eye in *a fine frenzy* rolling."

could do so) a lady, however deeply smitten. Those who have studied nature easily detect artifice. It is well known that fear renders the movements of a person tremulous and uncertain. If any one in his writing seeks to imitate these, we see at once that he has trembled with too firm a hand. If he pretends to be carried away by fiery passions, we shall discover a something of forced and studied far removed from the carelessness which he is endeavouring to put on. In short, if we reflect for a moment on the difficulty we experience in imitating the writing of others, we shall see that the same difficulty of success exists when we wish to counterfeit ourselves; the man can be recognised, but not the reality of passion.

It has been often said, though in too

general a manner, that motion constitutes life; that, therefore, we ought not to be surprised at its being susceptible of infinite shades of variety. Vivacity presumes rapidity of movement; but rapid movements do not always prove vivacity of character. A person who always writes in a hurry is anxious to finish his task; and if he writes rapidly, it is in order to give over movement the sooner; in the same way as a person may be industrious through sheer idleness, and may toil, the sooner to obtain rest. This desire, however, is easily seen in imperfect execution of the work; and the (so to speak) half-formed letters plainly prove that the employment of tracing them was irksome.

There is another kind of impatience which does not proceed from a dislike of labour, and which is shewn by a cer-

tain petulance in persons' movements. When this feeling is moderate, it produces little influence on the formation of the letters, but merely gives them the appearance of having been written (as we may say) by fits and starts. Is it possible to believe that when we write under the influence of anger, the mind only is affected, and that the hand does not sympathise with the agitation of the soul? Will it be content to co-operate with the feelings only by rapidity, and will it trace with carelessness the sentiment which is so powerfully felt? or will it not rather, partaking of the energy of the mind, exceed its ordinary limits, so that the letters shall have larger dimensions and a ruder formation than usual?

When, on the contrary, a naturally cheerful person is in a peculiarly gay

humour, the hand seems to sport over the paper. The irregularities which are allowed shew carelessness, but not the force of any passion. Some ornaments may be used; they may not even be devoid of grace; but they are without pretension; or if the hand be not sufficiently light to give them an agreeable shape, they are at any rate exempt from rudeness.

Lavater, in his work, has given a specimen of the writing of a person under phlegmatic melancholy, the which distinctly bears the impress of this character. He seems to trace the letters with difficulty and almost unwillingly; he takes no pleasure in forming them; he does not, therefore, make one superfluous stroke; his hand is without energy, yet not wanting in refinement. The slowness of the hand, when "march of mind" does

not retard it, can proceed only from want of practice, and consequently from a certain difficulty in forming the letters, or a deficiency of mental vivacity. But this distinction must not lead us into an error. Vivacity is surely the characteristic of childhood; yet children write slowly, and in their writing we clearly recognise the inexperienced hand.

The man who unites strength with slowness in writing, seems, while so employed, to be tracing a toilsome furrow. We must admit that the handwriting may indicate strength of character; we have shewn its influence in the stronger passions, and we have seen that it is the marked and decided character which distinguishes the writing of men from that of women. We cannot, therefore, be surprised, that a firm and vigorous hand

should be considered to display energy, for is not energy union of strength and vivacity? But it would be absurd to carry this judgment too far; it is enough for us to recognise traces of the fact. There is another kind of strength, which consists in its duration as to *time;* I mean to say, perseverance, for constancy has reference more properly to the duration of the feelings. In the first instance, the hand is firm; in the second, the form of the characters does not change. The inconstant person may not be tired of writing, but he is sure to tire of writing uniformly.

There is one quality which we may trace in the handwriting, which is rarely allied with vivacity,—this is gentleness. We often find it illustrated by the writing of women: not that we are never

liable to be mistaken on this point. We must judge by the absence of those peculiarities which indicate the opposite qualities, and by a certain softness in the formation of the letters. This character is easily discovered in the writing of Fénélon.

Virtues and vices are developed by the direction of the passions; but to ascertain what relation the object of our passions can have with the subject which occupies us, would be altogether a vain attempt. Nevertheless, we may trace some connexion between it (the subject which occupies us) and the intellectual faculties. We have already proved that the hand follows the guidance of the mind. The first conclusion at which this enables us to arrive is, that we may discover whether the person who writes is capable

of a continuous attention. He who writes without mistakes shews that he has the power of thus fixing his mind on one object; and this is of much greater importance than it at first appears to be.

There are many persons who, during their whole lives, have never been able to copy any thing without erasure; so incapable were they of exerting mastery over their attention.

Regnard, in delineating the portrait of the absent man, has not failed to represent this peculiarity; but with such accessories as are consistent with a comic representation.

If, on the contrary, we imagine to ourselves a man occupied with a subject which exercises his imagination or his judgment, the ease and rapidity with which he traces his thoughts prove the

facility with which he conceives them: it is therefore not without reason that Voltaire, speaking of the *Telemachus* of Fénélon, admires the neatness of the MS., in which there are found so few erasures.*

* This observation holds good as to Pope, viz. the MS. of his *Homer*, written on the backs of letters in the British Museum. The writing very clear; the erasures very few.—R. S.

N°. 1.

J'aurois au Stibesoin
d'une Suite de croquis
pour n'y mettre que
trait sans accessoire

N°. 2.

Monsieur, j'ai l'honneur de
vous adresser cette lettre
pour avoir l'honneur de
faire votre Connoissance
je suis Libraire &c.

DESCRIPTION OF THE ILLUSTRATIONS.

Nos. 1 and 2.

We need only glance at the writing of No. 2, to perceive a total want of education in the writer.

That of No. 1 shews a less neglected but by no means careful education.

No. 3.

The most palpable frivolity is here displayed in the affectation of numerous and ridiculous flourishes. No one would be astonished to learn that the writer,

who, having to select an occupation, has chosen to be a bookseller, and keep a reading-room, that he may have an opportunity of reading romances.

No. 4.

There is less frivolity in this than in the previous specimen; there is an expression of gaiety, but no elegance. It is the performance of a young man, who is not without talents, but whose taste is uncultivated.

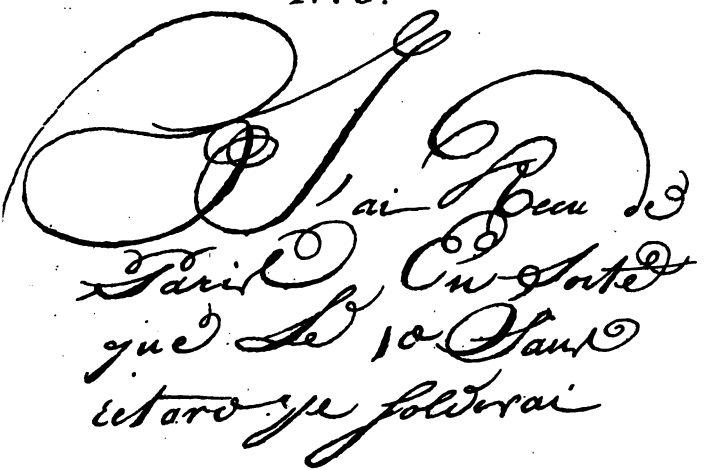
No. 5.

The writing of a woman, which displays great evenness of temper, a love of order, and great gentleness.

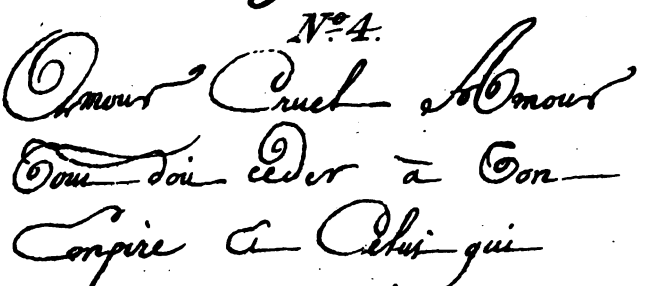
No. 6.

The writing of a lady of cultivated

N.° 3.



N.° 4.



N°. 5.

Je regrette bien de ne pouvoir vous accompagner quelquefois dans vos courses, de n'être près de vous dans le séjour des muses, nous y ferions mille observations autant agréables qu'utiles.

N°. 6.

je suis infiniment obligée Monsieur du Souvenir que vous me marquez et de l'interet

N°7.

Enigme

fière de mon pouvoir,
humble dans mon emploi,
j'ai vu souvent s'abbaisser
devant moi,
Des plus grands Souverains
la Majesté Suprême
neanmoins au milieu de
ma prospérité
dans le Sein de ma gloire
même
on me traite toujours
avec indignité!

mind, but deficient in method, and who does not sacrifice to the graces.

No. 7.

We here recognise the hand of a lady much practised in writing, with a refined taste, and who composes without difficulty (Madame de Genlis).

Nos. 8 and 9.

The writing in these specimens is evidently that of men of a very different turn of mind. The first displays a character full of vivacity, an imagination active, bold, and original, which, even when carrying out the most sublime conceptions, does not neglect the details; in short, it is that of the Author of the *Martyrs*, Chateaubriand.

The second, on the contrary, indicates a mind devoid of imagination, occupied with abstractions and minute details, in one word, that of a grammarian.

No. 10.

Written by a lady distinguished by a gentle and cultivated mind. It is characterised by exactness without minuteness, and the desire of pleasing without coquetry.

No. 11.

The writing of the greater number of the celebrated men of the time of Louis XIV. is remarkable for the large size of the letters (see higher up); but amongst them all, there is not one which displays so much grandeur and nobleness as that

N°. 8.

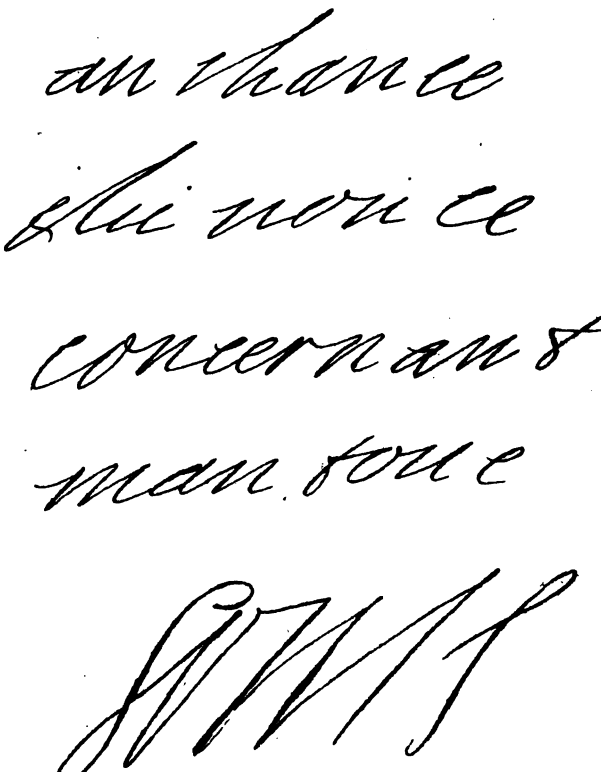
envoyer le génie les
mentyon et l'itinéraire
à M. de... avec la lettre
ci jointe.

N°. 9.

2°. l'attribut particulier de quantité placé devant
un nom individuel modifie un nom commun sous-
entendu : du rhône, le fleuve Rhône;

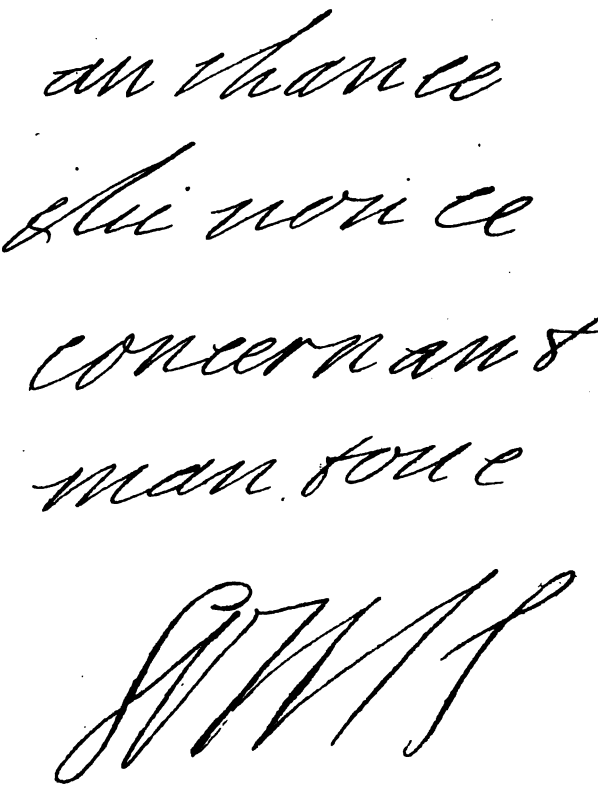
N°. 10.

Tous les mots de ma lettre ne seront plus
qu'une suite de questions puisque je lis.

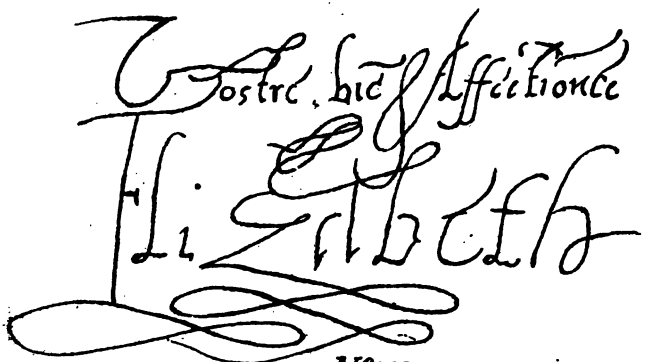


N°. 11.

Plate 8.



№ 12.



№ 13.

yowr oun feſtful
frindand cusignes

Marie R

of the illustrious person who seems to have stamped his own peculiarity on the age (Louis XIV.).

Nos. 12 and 13.

Who would believe that these two hands were of the same date? The first denotes stiffness and pride; the second, sweetness, simplicity, and nobleness.

The one is that of Elizabeth of England; the other, that of her cousin, Mary Stuart. The difference of the two hands corresponds perfectly with that of their characters.

Nos. 14 and 15.

These two numbers exhibit the writing of two celebrated women of the time of Louis XIV.

There is in the first more of simplicity, strength, and dignity. In the second, although we at once notice the sharpness of the letters, depending in some measure on the pen, and producing in this way an accidental variation, we discover much more lightness, facility, grace, and ease. These peculiarities are alike characteristic of Mad. de Maintenon and Mad. de Sevigné.

No. 16.

We see that the hand which traced these letters was in a sportive humour while writing; but the peculiarities which shew this do not express an amiable sportiveness. They display at the same time a strength, a perseverance, and an impetuosity of character, which is not calculated to inspire confidence even in

No. 14.

Madame la
Princesse m'a donné
ses ordres et je les
ai executés.

No. 15.

Ly Lett. Letter. Vous
sçavez grec, Monsieur
comme vous voulez
me gluber grek, Monsieur

N°16.

a Emden ce 13e Juin 1767

Je Vois bien mon Cher Sacripan
que Vous Conservez le Caracte=
=re d'ambassadeur a etampes
il faut bien que ce Carac=
=tere soit indelebile Vous
avez des espions chés moy
vous savez ce que je fais
et Vous formez des preven=
=tions sur mes ouvrages

Monseigneur
faudra til que le
pauvre Voltaire
ne vous ait d'autres
obligations que de
l'avoir corrigé par
une année de Baſ=
-tille.

N°. 18.

Paroles de Desportes

C.

Douces brébis mes fidelles
compagnes,
Vergers, buissons, forets, prés,
et montagnes
Joyez temoins de mon
contentement.
Et vous, ô Dieux! faites, je
vous supplies,
Que cependant que durera
ma vie
Je ne connoisse un autre
changement.

moments of gaiety; and it is very well known that the jokes of Frederick the Great were not always without bitterness.

No. 17.

There are few men of letters who could shew writing equal to this in beauty; but it is that of a man who excelled in every thing he undertook. It shews firmness and boldness, and at the same time a lightness, an ease, and peculiar grace. One discerns in it gaiety and sportiveness, in which, however, the writer does not permit himself any excess. It is the hand of Voltaire.

No. 18.

We see at once in the formation of the letters, and the manner in which they are

joined together, that the author did not compose rapidly. We are, however, led to believe, in reading the verses, that the peculiar deliberateness and ease displayed in the writing were caused by the pleasure felt by the writer in dwelling on the soothing images which they presented, so delightful to those who love to contemplate nature (J. J. Rousseau).

Nos. 19 and 20.

We should naturally expect to find in the writing of Boileau and Racine firmness and striking simplicity; in that of the first, a stiffness in accordance with his caustic disposition, and a slowness indicative of that with which he composed; in the writing of Racine, elegance, ease, and nobleness. This is easily traced in these two specimens.

№ 19.

a Lons Saudiersor

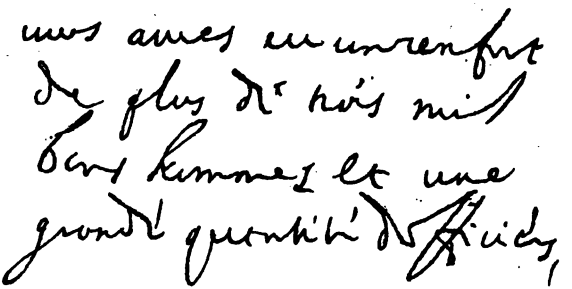
Croier qu'il n'y a persorne
qui vous ame plus
sincerement ni par plus de
raisons que moi

№ 20.

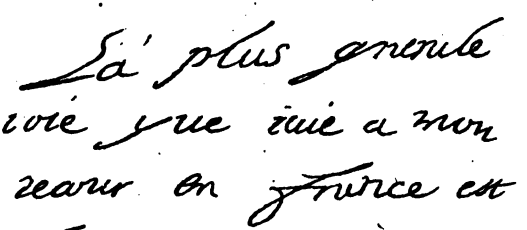
Comme j'estois sort
interroumpu hier en vous
escriuant je fis vne grosse
faute dans ma lettre

Plate 15.

N°. 21.



N°. 22.



No. 21.

Although this is an Italian hand, it is very peculiar. The writing is that of a stern and imperious man, endowed with great perseverance (Cardinal Mazarin).

No. 22.

Although this is *not* Italian, it possesses its flexibility and a very inconstant character (Cardinal Retz).

No. 23.

There are, in Nos. 23, 25, and 27, peculiarities which are common to all, and which denote order, clearness, precision, and simplicity. They are written by three celebrated philosophers. The first, which is Franklin's, shews gentle-

ness, amenity, composure, and a certain refinement of taste, which is quite consistent with his early predilection for poetry.

No. 24.

There are not, in this Italian hand, any of those hard and crooked lines which distinguish that in No. 21, where we see plainly that impatience has hurried on the hand; here, on the contrary, we can observe an imagination lively and fertile, capable of dictating verses as fast as the hand could write them.

No. 25.

D'Alembert was advanced in years when he wrote this letter; but years had not weakened his intellectual faculties. We recognise at once the leading pecu-

N°. 23.

I received duly the
elegant Present of your
Poetical Works. I
thank you much for the

N°. 24.

La vostra grata de' 16
cominciò per me dolente,
ma poi termina con molto
consolarmi

N°. 25.

Le Roi de Prusse m'a ecrit
après la mort de Mr. Thiriot
il y a 3 ou 4 ans, qu'il ne
prendroit plus de correspondance

N°. 26.

Le pere, que on
aura du temps
pour le executer

liarities of No. 23. The dryness of this writing does not, however, denote any power of imagination, and we miss the gentleness of Franklin. We guess at once why figures are used instead of words to express number;—the writer was a mathematician.

No. 26.

This specimen is evidently not written by a man of letters. On referring to No. 11, we see that it is of the same period: we are struck with the general resemblance. They are both remarkable for a certain grandeur of style: this latter has less nobleness, but more energy and originality.

No. 27.

Distinctness and method are delineated

in this writing, which is from the pen of Condillac.

No. 28.

This specimen is almost illegible, and written with the greatest rapidity, but does not indicate the impatience of a man who is in haste to finish, but the vivacity of a mind more rapid than the pen. It is also marked by a striking originality, and was, in truth, that of one of the most original and profound thinkers who ever lived, viz. Pascal.

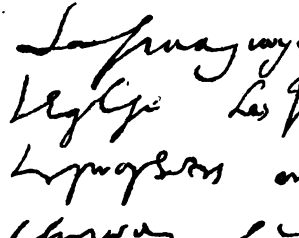
No. 29.

We find in this writing one characteristic which it has in common with the last, that is originality; but here it rather belongs to the elevation than to the depth of the thoughts. Who can avoid

N°. 27.

Les arts se divisent
en deux classes : l'une
comprend tous les beaux
arts, et l'autre tous les
arts mécaniques.

N°. 28.



N° 29.

Si ce prend la liberté
de demander avec
toute la instance
possible aux
Chambres de la
direction pour leur
celebrer leur dévouement

N°. 30.

Les Dieux Superieurs cachent aux
inferieurs tout ce qui leur plaît
et Minerve qui accompagnoit
Telemaque sous la figure de

N°. 31.

De ton amour et de ta verité
Ce cœur à jamais pénétré
Sera fidele à ta loi Sainte,
Et mon triomphe est assuré.
L'Impie aux traits de ta justice
Croit échapper, mais le Supplice
Tôt ou tard atteint les pécheurs.

recognising the traces of an imagination at once impetuous and superior to all rules? We need only cast our eyes over this and the following specimen, to observe the contrast between the writing of Bossuet and Fénélon.

No. 30.

The writing of Fénélon forms a remarkable contrast to that which precedes it. Here we have gentleness, ease, and grace. There are no unequal spaces; every thing denotes a fertile imagination, but in which the ideas do not follow each other so rapidly.

No. 31.

In the royal library of Paris an ode in Ms. is preserved, which is attributed to

Racine, of which we here give a specimen. On comparing this writing with that at No. 20, taken from the correspondence of Racine, we see at once that it cannot be that of this celebrated man, as it has neither the ease, the nobleness, nor the energy, which distinguish the writing of that great poet.

No. 32.*

This is the autograph of a phlegmatic, melancholy man, susceptible of delicacy and sensibility, but destitute of that kind of energy which arises from serenity of mind. I doubt whether he can be susceptible of the love of order and neatness. Devout and melancholy, he would be conscientious even to a scruple.

* This specimen and the next are taken from Lavater.

N.° 32.

Dans un endroit Solitaire, Separé de tout le monde, borné des montagnes affreuses et peuplées des bêtes les plus féroces, jugés quel plaisir votre correspondance me feroit. Le temps ni je n ai plus de vos nouvelles me paroit si long, que je vous prie de m'en donner Surtout de votre vie litteraire La Situation de Bonnent où je suis depuis presque deux mois

N°. 33.

J'ai l'honneur de souhaiter
le bonjour à Monsieur....
et de le prier de le souvenir
d'un homme qui lui est
dévoué.

Signature de Louis XVI.

Louis

Signature de Louis XVII.

Louis

Signature de la Reine.

Marie Antoinette

Signature de Madame Elisabeth.

Elisabeth Marie

No. 33.

In this writing there is much more life and warmth than in the preceding (32). It displays the man of taste. It is altogether more uniform, more regular, more energetic, and more firm; and yet I am sure that it bears the marks of a phlegmatic mind, which has great difficulty in attending to exactness and precision. It shews an intelligent and talented observer, but one to whom I can allow a very slight aptness for the arts.

ESSAY ON THE ART OF JUDGING MEN BY THEIR STYLE.

If the art of forming an opinion of the characters of men by their handwriting is established on a solid foundation, as we have shewn in the essay just read, that of appreciating them by their style cannot be less so. It is chiefly from their literary productions that we can ascertain the shades of difference which distinguish authors from each other. Who can read the Fables of the good La Fontaine without forming a tolerably correct idea of the character of this simple and unsophisticated man? And after reading the works of Fénélon and Bossuet, are we

not struck by the extreme difference of character in these two celebrated churchmen? We shall make no endeavour to develop here the existence of the physiognomic characters by which the works of literary men are distinguished, since it is a truth already recognised; but we shall rather confine ourselves to prove the existence of these peculiarities from the writings not generally considered as literary productions, viz. from the style of their correspondence. Men are not all born for literary pursuits; indeed, by far the larger number retrace their thoughts with difficulty, and have no facility in expressing their sentiments. The style which they adopt, however, has also its physiognomical peculiarities, and also displays the character of the individual; the shades of difference are perhaps more fu-

gitive, more difficult to catch, than those of a man of letters who gives himself up to literary composition; but they do possess an existence.

If the peculiarities of the character shew themselves in the arrangement of the letters, why should they not display themselves in the arrangement and choice of words, in the order of the sentences, and in the nature of the ideas?

Select two men by chance, give them any subject you please to write upon, and they will most probably treat it in the most dissimilar manner. From whence arises this difference? It is caused by the diversity of their characters. How is it possible to suppose that a man of a cold disposition can express his sentiments or paint his sensations in the same manner as one of an excited imagination?

In order to methodise our plan, we will divide the characters of men into several large classes, to each of which we shall attribute the style of composition which is the most peculiar to it, and the sort of writing which it most commonly uses. This new classification, which we propose hereafter to carry out still further, will at once give us two great advantages,—precision and clearness.

Instead of the division of temperament,* followed, up to this time, by most of those who have written on physiognomy, we will substitute another, based on the absence or presence of the two

* The division into four temperaments is far from accurate. That which is called a melancholy temperament is less temperament than an organic affection of the brain; and the muscular, or athletic, and nervous temperament are omitted.

qualities which appear to us to influence the character more powerfully than any other—imagination and energy. These two are the only qualities actually born with man; education modifies but cannot create them; and from the union of these two, in various proportions, spring all others.

CLASSIFICATION.

Individuals totally deficient in imagination.

1. Without energy. | 2. Energetic.

Individuals endowed with imagination.

3. Energetic. | 4. Without energy.

Here are four classes perfectly distinct from each other, which include all possible varieties of character. We will proceed to illustrate in succession their various qualities.

No. 1.

Individuals without imagination, but of an energetic character.

This class, which is rather numerous, includes men of a cold and methodical character, who go direct to the end they propose to themselves; and if this end be fortune, they rarely fail. The persons of this class are successful in commerce—are rarely remarkable for sensibility, still more rarely susceptible of love; beauty has very few charms for them. Their virtues are uprightness, sobriety, economy, prudence, consistency, and constancy: they have in general an aversion to gambling. Their most ordinary faults are avarice, insensibility, and egotism.

The style of composition usual among this class of persons is clear but laconic,

and totally devoid of imagery. The letters which they write to their most intimate friend or beloved relative will be almost as cold as a business document. Little adapted for appreciating the beauties of nature, they will describe them minutely, but without feeling; and under the influence of their colourless pencil, the most enchanting spots will lose all their charm and freshness. If they enter upon a literary career, they usually do so without success. Their writing generally very much resembles specimen 33 (see p. 51).

No. 2.

Persons devoid of imagination, and without energy.

This class answers exactly to the phlegmatic temperament (see the *Pocket*

Lavater). The faults and virtues of these persons are much the same as the last, but of a much less vehement character. Their style has not the strength and conciseness of the preceding; it is more enervated and duller, but equally deficient in imagery; it is remarkable for an extreme diffuseness, which does not proceed from the abundance of ideas, but is caused by useless repetitions, and by the great number of words used to express the same thing. Their writings are therefore distinguished by a poverty of ideas; for whenever the words are numerous, we may be sure that the ideas are few. Their pictures are cold, their descriptions without colour; and the want of energy is principally remarkable by the weakness of the sentences and by their diffuseness (see specimen 32, p. 50).

No. 3.

Persons gifted with imagination and energy.

The persons included in this class may be regarded as most fortunately organised; to the most brilliant qualities of the mind they unite great solidity of judgment. They generally enjoy great success in a literary career; and those who have most distinguished themselves by masterpieces of composition commonly belong to this class.

We find in individuals who belong to this division, a brilliant style, energetic and full of imagery; the expressions they use are always correct and appropriate to the subject. If a refined taste, the result of a careful education, guide their

pen, their style will be noble and elegant (see Nos. 8 and 29).

Persons of a melancholy temperament are commonly of this class; but the loftiness of their sentiments, the shade of depression cast over their conversation and actions, must be regarded as proceeding from infirm health, and not from any peculiarity incident to the temperament. Their style is remarkable for a mystic or exalted character, sometimes very obscure, and the confusion observed in it reflects that of the mind which conceives it; but it always bears the stamp of originality natural to it, an imitation of which must be attempted in vain.

No. 4.

Persons gifted with imagination, but without energy.

Persons without energy, whose imagination is rich and fertile, write with an extreme facility; but their style is more brilliant than solid: it is often deficient in colouring, and is almost always wanting in vigour. The sentiments are expressed with a certain degree of delicacy; but the passions are not delineated with energy, and often without fidelity. Their style is commonly fertile in imagery, but the imagery is frequently incorrect.

The character of these persons displays very remarkable peculiarities. Their minds are of singular inconstancy; in an incredibly short space of time they experience

the most opposite feelings: in a few minutes joy will replace grief; and that will be succeeded by some other opposite sentiment. The most trifling circumstance deprives them of hope, and some impression equally trifling raises their expectations in as high a degree. These persons have generally good and feeling hearts.

They are much under the dominion of their passions; but this dominion is not of so permanent a nature as with the individuals of the preceding class. A love of play would, however, be peculiarly dangerous to them.

Persons of this character are in general uncertain in their plans and changeable in their resolutions; they rarely carry out any business without altering their plan several times, and often end by taking

the worst; as it is generally observable, that with them the first suggestion of the mind, that which must be considered a sudden inspiration, is commonly the best. It is the same with their style,—the first ebullition of thought is infinitely superior to those sentences which they have considered again and again (see Nos. 4 and 22).

Illu

I am

you that ever

time so unfa

the memory

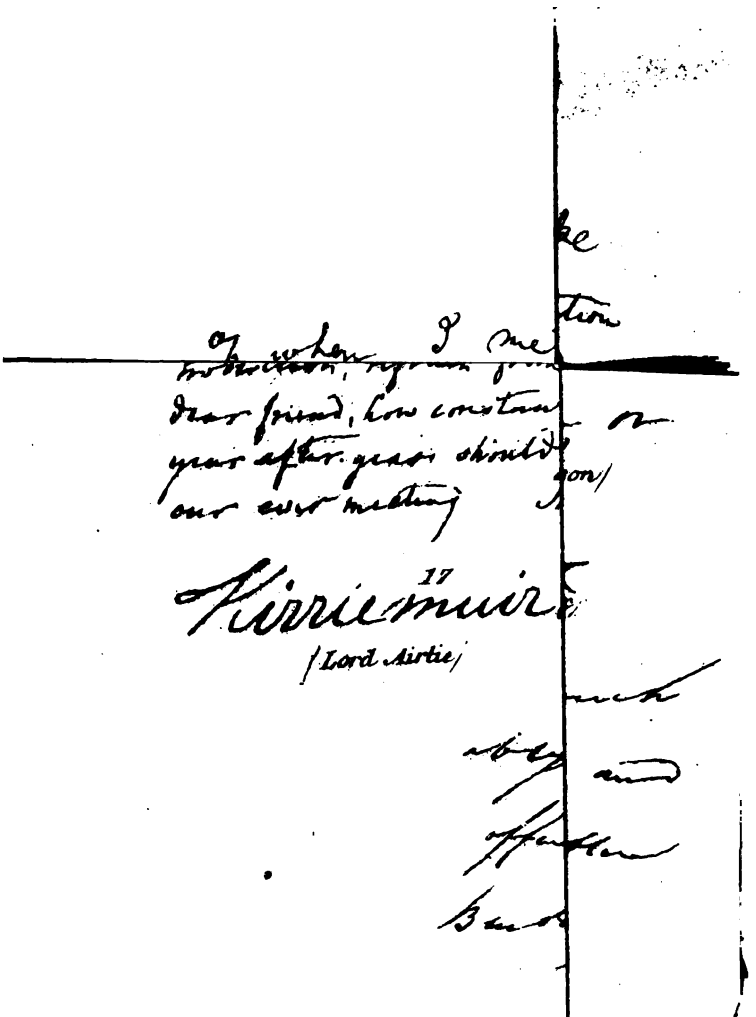
ratify a step

I

letter which a

busily employ

for my journey



ACCOUNT

OF THE

ALLEGED ART OF READING THE CHARACTERS OF INDIVIDUALS IN THEIR HANDWRITING,

Showing the Physiological Grounds of that kind of Chiromancy;

WITH

FAC-SIMILE ILLUSTRATIONS FROM THE AUTOGRAPHS OF WELL-KNOWN PERSONS.

BY

WILLIAM SELLER, M.D. F.R.C.P.E.

ART OF READING THE CHARACTERS

OF INDIVIDUALS

IN THEIR HANDWRITING.

To say that the character, mental or moral, may be read in the handwriting, sounds at first like some new mesmeric outrage on common sense. And in truth, whoever sets up for an infallible judge of the course of another's conduct in given circumstances, from no better criterion than the inspection of that other's handwriting, is much akin to an impostor. Yet the turn of a man's handwriting does

give a certain insight into his thoughts. When he takes a pen between his fingers, the movements necessary to produce the signs representing his ideas vary with nearly as much latitude, compared with the corresponding movements in other persons, as his style of speaking differs from theirs in expressing the same general sentiment. Writing is, in short, a muscular act, or a series of acts, involving a number of complexly combined voluntary movements; and every such act takes to itself a character peculiar to the individual. There are many other bodily acts of a muscular kind of a completely parallel nature—speaking, singing, laughing, walking, dancing, skating; and it needs no proof that every individual speaks, sings, laughs, walks, dances, and skates, in a mode peculiar to himself,

even in doing the same parts in these several acquirements. Can the character, then, be read, in any of these several acts, as surely as in the kindred operation of writing? In these the principle of variation is the same; yet the working of it mocks our utmost efforts of attention. On the handwriting we can pore at leisure; and in this respect there is an unequalled advantage over other muscular acts; inasmuch as the whole effect of each act transfers itself to the paper, and stands for years or ages, challenging comparison with the performances of the rest of men in the same accomplishment.

But if, as is most unquestionably true, no two persons ever wrote exactly the same hand ever since the invention of letters; and though it be allowed that the cause of the difference is less in the

mechanical form of the organs concerned than in the peculiarity of each person's mental constitution, how, it will naturally be asked, should the handwriting lead to the perception of character, since the former depends on the latter—which, by supposition, is not yet known? The answer to this question points to the narrow limits within which character can be predicted from the handwriting, even were the art already carried to its utmost possible degree of perfection. Though every person has a handwriting peculiar to himself, it never can indicate the peculiarities of his individual character. All that is true is, that on the inspection of a number of specimens of handwriting, these, in virtue of certain resemblances and differences, not of a particular but of a general kind, can be thrown into a

few groups; and that certain general, not particular tendencies of thought. and action, in the individuals concerned, are observed to correspond to each group with some degree of constancy. But these groups, even in the experience of those who pay much attention to the art, are far from numerous; and therefore all that can be learned from the most expert practitioner in this mystery is, that a person has certain general intellectual and moral tendencies in common with a large fraction, rather than certain other such tendencies which belong more to a somewhat larger fraction of the human species. All that is told of him, besides, is made up of generals, cunningly passed off for particulars. Moreover, the handwriting of two persons may have that resemblance which brings each into the

same group, without any agreement in the most essential points of their character. And again, two people may be alike cruel, alike benevolent, alike generous, alike avaricious, without any discoverable resemblance between their respective modes of writing. And this arises not so much because the manner of writing bears the stamp of intellectual not of moral difference, but because the variations of hand coincide less with broad distinctions among the great springs of human action, than with the mere turn and air with which the thoughts and feelings, whatever these may be in kind, betray themselves to the world. Thus, as the particular symbols of written language are the same, whether the sentiments conveyed by them be praiseworthy or vicious, so the style of these symbols, in

the handwriting of an individual, indicates not the good or evil tendency of his thoughts, but only the fashion after which those of either kind arise and become manifested.

There is a general resemblance in the manner of writing among those persons whose thoughts and feelings are more orderly and regulated in their trains and successions. Again, there is a discoverable resemblance in the kind of writing of those whose trains of thought and feeling are of a more rambling description, broken in upon by every accidental occurrence, and preserving no order unless when regard is had to some immediate important end. The handwriting which belongs to the former may be described as rather small, uniform, somewhat constrained, or with little openness or free-

dom. Of this kind of hand Nos. 9 and 12 are examples. The kind of hand opposite to this is larger, more free and open, sometimes degenerating into a very irregular straggling hand. Nos. 7, 8, 17, 3, are examples.

But in the study of handwriting, when our intention is to read in it the character of the individual, there are many precautions to be used, and many deductions to be made. First of all, the general turn of the handwriting varies in different ages, and therefore we should exclude those belonging to other centuries than our own, or at all events compare those of distant times only with those belonging to the same period. Then there are many hands which have never become formed, or which have remained in a kind of half-developed or abortive state,

from want of sufficient instruction or of the requisite attention. These should be excluded at least in our first attempts to judge of character by this criterion. Then there are business hands,—the hands of men whose occupation it is to write daily, and at all times in their best manner. Such hands have so much of general resemblance as very much at least to obscure the indications of variety in the character of the writers. Then there are hands acquired by imitation, and modes of writing which, like the "Galloppe" or the "Polka," become the rage for a season; in these all individual character is swallowed up. Of this kind is the hand at present in vogue with ladies. Thus, the fac-simile of Miss Foote's hand, No. 11, might pass for the writing of half the young ladies in the empire.

Between Miss Foote's hand and that of Miss Stephens, No. 18, there is a great contrast, the latter being full of individual character.

But we hear the reader saying, if so many deductions be made, there will be no hands left to exercise the art upon. By a determined votary of this mystery, even these excepted cases may be turned to good account. Thus it is a material point in one's character to have had little or indifferent instruction, and yet to write well; or to have had the usual amount and kind of instruction, and never to get beyond an unformed journeyman hand; or to have had daily practice in matters of business, and yet to have retained much of individual character in the hand; or for a young lady to have been much exposed to the temptation of an imitative

20.

compliments to Mr. Lumsden
writing in this note may
answer the purpose —
Edinburgh — October 14th —

21.

Daniel Connell.

April sixteen 1838.

22.

Lee Wellington

May twenty eighth 1833

23.

Geo Canning

24.

I wish to know whether
12th May Impd Lume

kind of writing, or to have been taught by a fashionable writing-master, and yet to have preserved the individuality of her handwriting. We instance an example of a young lady's hand, who beyond all doubt has successfully resisted the fashionable female style of writing; see No. 20. It is of common remark that originality of character is more and more rarely encountered in a refined age and in refined circles of society; and the unequivocal decline of marked originality of handwriting, especially in the female world, falls under the same rule. One thing the female world cannot throw off, and that is the marked peculiarity in the handwriting of their whole body, as compared with that of the other sex. As refinement advances, this peculiarity in female hands seems to

become more and more apparent. Yet it has prevailed from the first; and most likely this striking distinction between the male and female mode of writing was what originally suggested the idea of judging of characters from the handwriting.

It may be observed further, where there is a strong original bias of character, that the handwriting, which in early life had acquired a common style from habits of business, imitation, or the influence of fashion, tends, as life advances, to lose such a common form, and to assume that turn which indicates peculiarity of mental character. Thus the retaining of any such general style of writing to the middle period of life, when the circumstances which at first formed it have ceased or declined in force, must be re-

garded as a separate source of knowledge of the individual's character.

But the reader, we have no doubt, is by this time importunate for a first practical lesson in the reading of the character of his friends from their handwriting. While we repeat, then, that the varieties observable in the handwriting of individuals are in a great measure dependent on differences in their mental character, we must confess that the mystery of pronouncing authoritatively on the prominent points of a person's character from his handwriting is a pseudo-art,—an art which cannot be exercised successfully without assuming a good deal of assurance, and having obtained some skill in penetrating the present thoughts of others. We doubt if it can be applied to much useful purpose. It might, indeed, be

employed sometimes by the medical man to assist him in the diagnosis of diseases —that is, by comparing the patient's natural hand with its changed state under disease. How far this might be carried, we are not prepared to pronounce; but we have been struck with the change on the mode of writing produced by insanity, and also by the uniformity of the change in the hypochondriac state.

But little useful as this art may be in general, it may prove a source of harmless amusement, and of some incidental instruction; and one important advantage at least can be pointed out as attendant on the exercise of it, namely, the convincing men how easy it is, when the slenderest clue is obtained, for a pretender to make people believe that a great deal is known of their thoughts

and character, when in truth his knowledge amounts to little more, beyond what they themselves inadvertently disclose to him, than that they have, in common with a large proportion of the human family, a small excess of certain modes of thinking and acting, which, in a somewhat less degree, are not unfamiliar to the whole race. The facility here referred to, on the part of many persons, to yield up their confidence the moment some small coincidence appears between the would-be seer's words and the supposed thoughts, inclinations, or habits of the person whose character is under examination, is equally the foundation of the old popular faith in palmistry and other kinds of fortune-telling, and of the modern belief in phrenology, mesmerism, phreno-mesmerism, and other like delu-

sions; and if the exercise of the harmless mystery of deciphering some points of character from handwriting can serve to awaken the public to the delusive arts so often practised on them, the encouragement of its cultivation might prove a general benefit.

With the few precepts about to be laid down, let any person try his hand at deciphering characters and complexions from styles of writing, and he will be surprised at his own success in the estimation of his auditors, at the amount of assistance which they afford him spontaneously, and at the little skill required to make them part with any secret which it is for his purpose to possess.

Thus, though a person may begin his scrutiny with the purest honesty of purpose, as a mere trial of the pretensions of

the art, when he finds men so willing to be deceived, he cannot help taking advantage of their facility, and making their own inadvertent confessions subservient to eking out the slender information furnished by his own ostensible oracle.

The physiology of handwriting lies in its connexion with temperament. But as the subject of temperament is rather intricate and unsettled, a few general remarks in the first place will be appropriate. The disclosure of the complexion —the colour of the hair and eyes—the age—the degree of stoutness or slenderness—and the general form of the person, and the like, should be made a preliminary condition; though, if it be felt that any part of these particulars can be pronounced on from the handwriting, as is

often possible for one who has made temperament his study, an impression is thereby made in the highest degree favourable to further success.

When the hand is small, close, without freedom or fluency, the hair and eyes are almost always black, or very dark, the complexion pale or cream-coloured; or if the hair be lighter, the person is spare and dry, the complexion brown or sallow, free from colour. In Nos. 9, 12, (see also No. 5, from the French work,) there are examples of the kind of hand common in spare black-haired persons, and in the dry brown-coloured temperament. Not unfrequently very black-haired persons write a different kind of hand, in which case they are commonly florid, or at least of fuller habit. But we must be prepared for exceptions;—

in the fac-simile of Sir Walter Scott's autograph there is almost an exception, for, notwithstanding his fair complexion, it approaches closely to the hand of the dark-haired. In his case, the small and confined turn of the hand may have been the result of that delicacy of health under which he suffered in early life. This is a kind of case in which an error cannot be avoided without precaution. But the adept is ever on his guard, and strives to shun such errors by making cautious approaches by means of indirect questions; and his wariness is commonly rewarded by the timely disclosure of the hazard to which his art would have been exposed by a too rash application of its rules.

When the hand is large, free, and flowing, or large, straggling, and irre-

gular, it may be generally pronounced that of a fair-haired person. Such a hand as is figured in No. 17 could not possibly be that of a dark-complexioned person; for even if the hair were dark, he would show in other respects the marks proper to the fair-haired constitution.

The two opposite kinds of handwriting just referred to belong to different kinds of temperament, for these opposite complexions mark different temperaments. And as certain mental characteristics, not indeed of a particular but of a general kind, on physiological grounds, can be assigned to the several temperaments, a foundation is thus obtained for the discovery of some points in the mental habits of the individuals under examination, which, with a little skill, may be dressed up into a plausible account of

their prevailing modes of thought and action.

The subject of temperament is of itself a study too little settled at present to permit very exact rules to be laid down from it without a preliminary examination of its whole extent. Such an examination is altogether incompatible with the brevity within which the subject under consideration must be discussed at present. Without attempting, then, either to adopt any of the views of temperament laid down by authority, or to make a new arrangement that should deserve the name of being square with the actual state of physiological knowledge, the following prominent temperaments may be regarded as sufficient to illustrate the purpose of this hurried sketch.

1. The vigorous light-haired excitable temperament—much the same as the sanguine and the muscular of authors.

2. The dark-haired excitable temperament, or choleric.

3. The light-haired little excitable temperament, or phlegmatic.

4. The dark-haired slowly excitable temperament, or excitable only to painful emotions—the melancholic.

5. The feeble light-haired excitable temperament, or light-haired serous excitable temperament—much the same as the nervous.

6. The light-haired solicitous temperament, open chiefly to unpleasant emotions—corresponding to the melancholic.

7. The mixed temperaments.

The kinds of handwriting which, as already noticed, mark the first, or vigor-

ous light-haired excitable temperament, are the large flowing open hand, and the large irregular mode of writing.

Of the dark-haired excitable temperament the hand is small, equal, and of some freedom.

In the light-haired little excitable temperament, the hand differs but in a shade from that of the first temperament; it is probably for the most part less free, more methodical, and slow.

In the dark-haired little excitable temperament, the hand is small and cramp, altogether without openness or freedom.

In the feeble light-haired excitable temperament, the hand is running, unequal, and very variable—not very large.

In the light-haired solicitous temperament, the hand is small, unequal, not emphatic.

In the mixed temperaments the hand of course varies. In the dark-haired florid mixed temperament, the hand is free, flowing, bold, without irregularity.

A few of the general features of character in each of those temperaments afford the basis of the oracular deliverance in each case; and the rest is to be dexterously filled in with those thoughts, feelings, inclinations, and emotions, which cannot but be common to the whole human race, or at least to the whole of that part of society to which the individual under examination belongs. And this last precept is to be fearlessly followed; for, under such circumstances, there are few who take the trouble to distinguish between what is peculiar to themselves, and what must be common to them with the rest of mankind.

The first temperament in the above enumeration is marked by a very ready susceptibility of emotions, chiefly of the lively character, by an impatience of a state of rest, by the love of change, by the desire of new sources of excitement, by less settled firmness of purpose. Müller thus describes the same temperament:

"In the sanguine temperament the main tendency of the mind is to the feeling of pleasure; while there is great excitability, but little durability of the states of emotion when excited. An individual of this temperament is much the subject of pleasurable feelings, and seeks that which will excite them; he readily sympathises, and forms many friendships, but as readily relinquishes them; frequently changes his inclinations, and is little to be depended on; he is easily en-

raged, but as soon relents; promises readily and much, and is sincere at the time, but neglects his promises if they are not immediately performed; conceives many projects, but never executes them; is charitable towards the faults of others, and expects the same indulgence for his own errors; lastly, he is easily appeased, is open-hearted, amiable, good-tempered, social, and uncalculating."*

Of the second, or what is termed above the dark-haired excitable temperament, the same author gives the following account:

"The choleric person exhibits a power of action remarkable both for intensity and endurance, under the influence of

* Müller's Elements of Physiology (Dr. Baly's translation), p. 1409.

passions or desires which have reference to himself or others. His emotions are highly excited whenever he experiences any opposition or check to the strivings of his mind, whether these strivings tend to the extension of the power of self, or merely to the maintenance of his integrity; and his ambition, his jealousy, his revenge, and his love of rule, know no bounds as long as he is under the influence of passion. He reflects little, but acts unhesitatingly, either because he alone is right, or more especially because it is his will so to act; and he is not readily convinced of his errors, but persists unalterably in the course to which his passion prompts him until he ruins both himself and others."*

* Müller's Elements of Physiology, p. 1409.

Of what is named above the light-haired little excitable temperament, Müller says:

"When the organisation of an individual is such that his mental strivings or emotions are neither intense nor enduring, he is of the *phlegmatic* or unexcitable temperament, in which the ideas of things, and the combinations of these ideas, remain more or less completely mere ideas, uncombined with any strong feelings of the restriction or expansion of self, unmodified by pleasure, pain, or desire. The phlegmatic temperament, to which we here allude, is by no means a pathological condition. In persons of this temperament ideas are conceived with as much rapidity as in others, and there may be the same power of mind as in other temperaments. When the in-

tellectual faculties are good, this temperament will render a person capable of more difficult acts, and successful in a more extraordinary degree, than would be possible were his impulses rendered stronger by a more passionate temperament. Such a person, whose mental strivings or emotions are not violent, remains cool and undisturbed, and is not drawn away from his determined course to the performance of acts which he would repent on the morrow. He is more sure and trustworthy than persons of an opposite temperament, and his success more to be depended on: in times of danger and at moments of importance, when good judgment, calculation, and reflection are needed rather than very quick action, his powers are all at his command. Great energy of action, which is depen-

dent on the susceptibility of the strivings of self, is not to be looked for in a truly phlegmatic subject, such as I have described; but in place of it, all the good effects of delay and cautious calculating endurance. Circumstances which would excite the choleric and sanguine to hasty passionate acts, and would cause them painful and bitter feelings, are regarded by the phlegmatic without emotion, exciting merely his meditation; so that he neither complains nor takes part in them, but pronounces dispassionate reflections upon mankind and their conditions. He does not feel his misfortunes strongly, bears them with patience, and is also not affected in any great degree by the sufferings of others. He contracts few friendships; but when he has formed them does not break them, and may be a

perfectly trustworthy and useful man in society. Where rapid action is required, the phlegmatic person is less successful, and others leave him behind; but when no haste is necessary, and delay is admissible, he quietly attains his end, while others have committed error upon error, and have been diverted from their course by their passions. The phlegmatic person knows his proper sphere, and does not trespass on that of others, or come into collision with them. From this conduct, as well as from an orderly and steady course of action, in which he keeps his object in view, and avoids self-deception, he derives a contented tone of mind, alike free from turbulent enjoyments and deep suffering."*

* Müller's Elements of Physiology, p. 1408.

In what is described above as the dark-haired little excitable temperament, the same author says:

"The feeling of pain is the fundamental tendency of the mind in the melancholic temperament. The melancholic person is as easily excited as the sanguine, but in him painful sentiments are of longer duration, and more frequent than pleasurable feelings; the sufferings of others excite his deep sympathy; he fears, repents, mistrusts, and has misgiving on every occasion, and pays especial attention to every thing which favours this tone of mind. He is prone to fancy himself offended and injured, or neglected; impediments which he meets with render him dejected, timid, and doubting; and he loses the power either of acting or of judging. His desires are

full of sadness, and of the feeling of having suffered a loss: his grief is immoderate and inconsolable."*

It was our intention to have attempted a short description of each of the above temperaments; but finding the accounts given by Müller so well adapted to the purpose, we have preferred quoting them.

Of the remaining temperaments on our list Müller says nothing.

The feeble light-haired excitable temperament is in many respects but a modified form of the first or sanguine, the excitability being less sustained owing to the deficiency of bodily vigour.

The light-haired solicitous temperament is a modified form of the melancholic temperament.

* Müller's Elements of Physiology, p. 1410.

The mixed temperaments are of frequent occurrence, probably much more so in modern times than in ancient, and as it would seem, from the great admixture of races, particularly so in this country. When the temperament appears to be mixed, it would be ill advised to attempt to describe it from the handwriting; but in this case the person being first described, the temperament that predominates may probably be often inferred from the handwriting.

Such, then, are a few hints of the grounds on which the alleged art of reading the character of individuals in the handwriting depends. Though we regard it as a pseudo-art, not capable of being turned to much useful account, there may be some who entertain a different opinion. If these should feel disposed to

cultivate the subject, we think we have pointed out to them the only grounds on which any improvement can be accomplished; namely, the attentive study of the handwriting of individuals in connexion with temperament. We are not aware that this mode of cultivating it has ever been methodically entered on.

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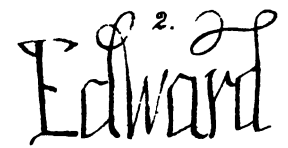
It is seldom that long experience of mankind does not induce a great distrust of mere external appearances. We study lines and features only to be more and more deceived; and rest at last in the rational conviction, that men are only to be rightly judged of by their actions. For my own part, I have reached that point of physiognomical scepticism, that I would

1.



Henry VIII.

2.



(6th)

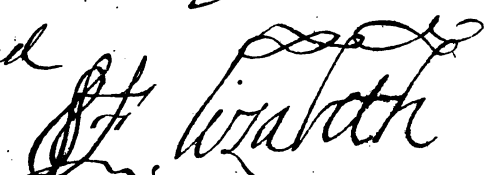
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Mazye the quene

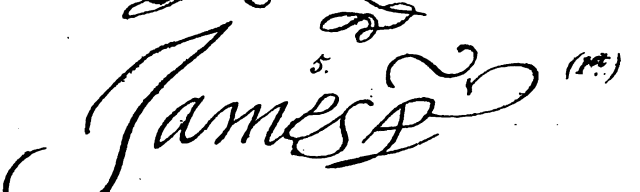
4.

Your most assured

bond



5.



(1st)

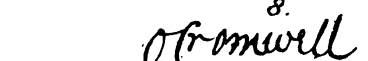
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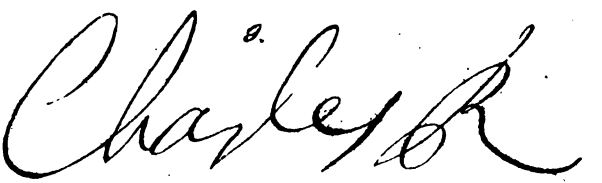
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9.



10. (2nd)

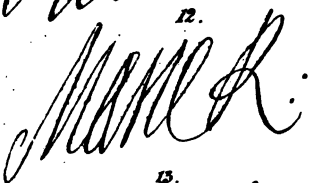


Plate 28.

11.



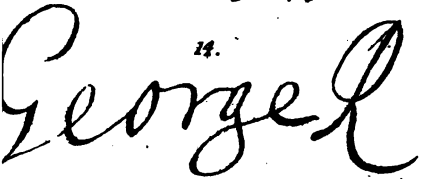
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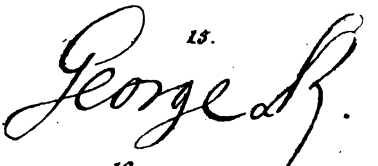
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16.



ON

CHARACTERISTIC SIGNATURES,

BY

STEPHEN COLLET, A.M., 1823.

WITH

ILLUSTRATIVE SIGNATURES.

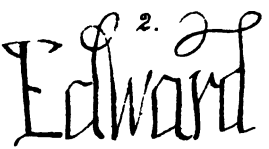
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1.



Henry VIII.

2.

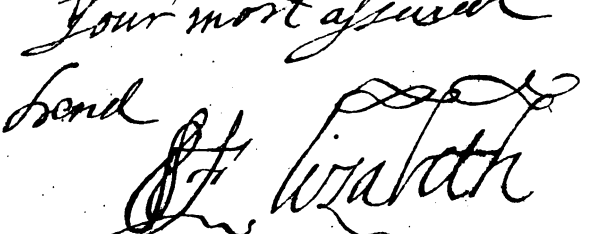


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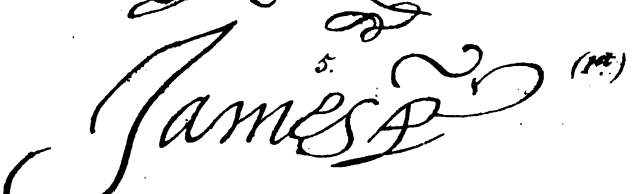
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5.



(1st)

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8.



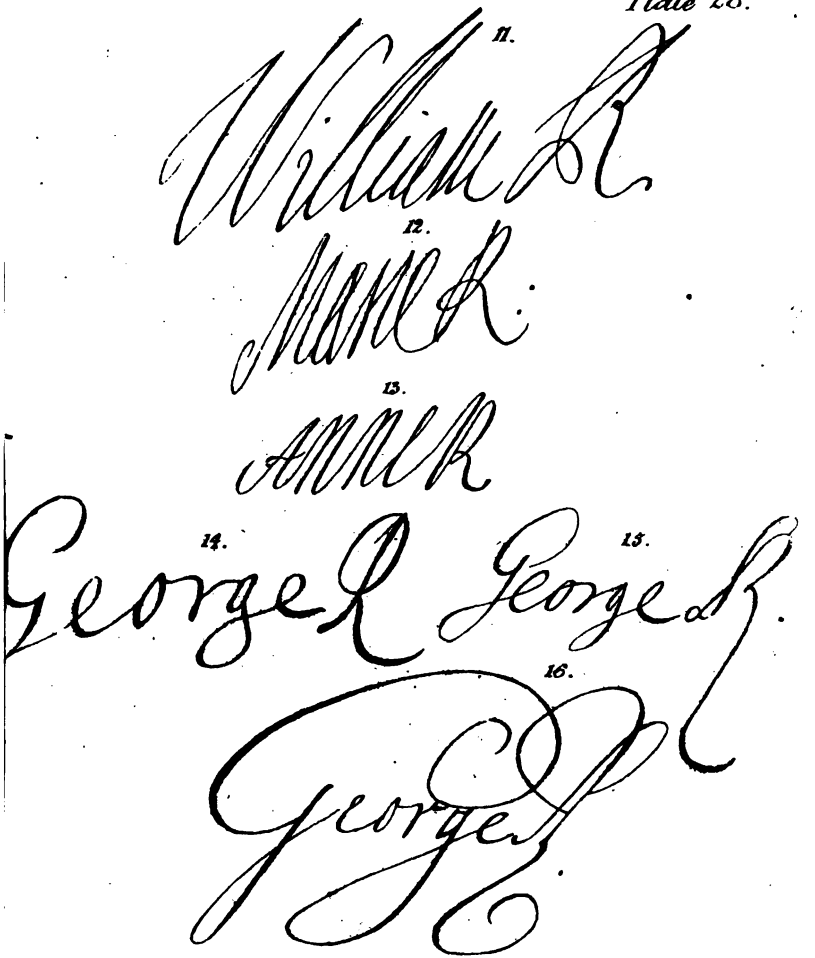
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10. (2nd.)



Plate 28.



17.

George R

18.

Charlotte R.

20. J. Addison.

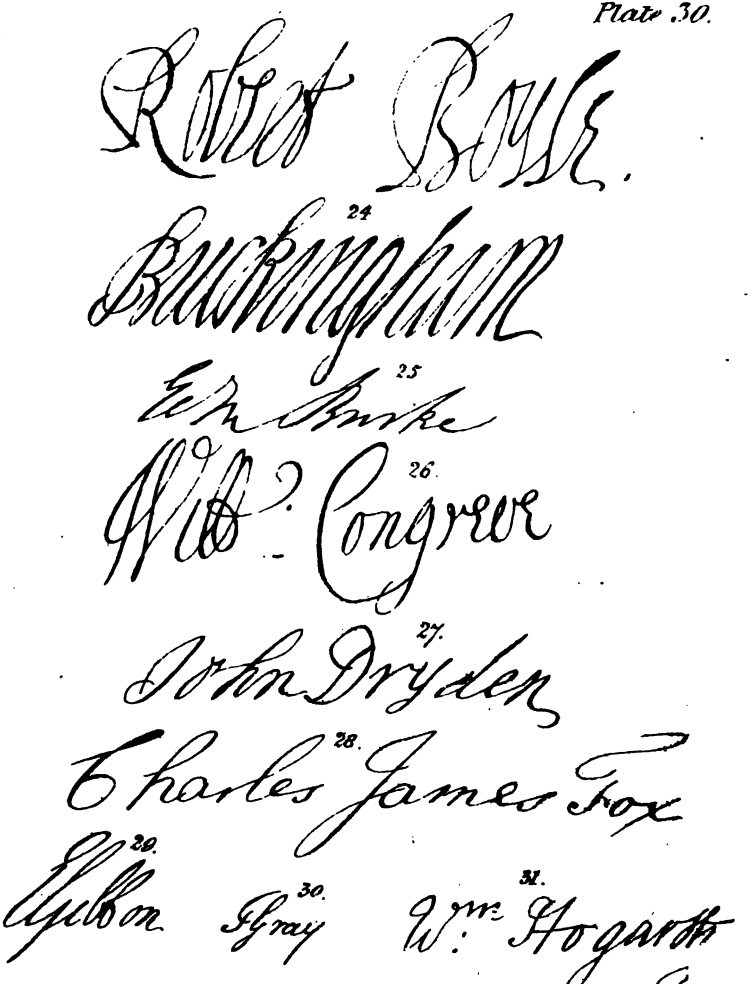
19. Charlotte Princess.

21. Ascanius

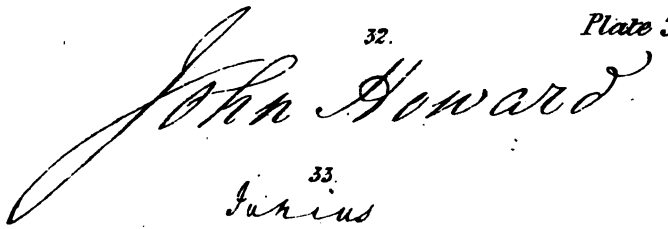
22. Bolingbroke

7th January 1713

14


Robert Boyle.
24
Buckingham
25
Edm Burke
26.
Wm. Congreve
27.
John Dryden
28.
Charles James Fox
29.
Gibbon
30.
T. Gray
31.
Wm. Hogarth

32.

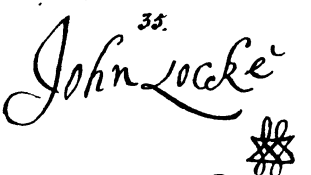


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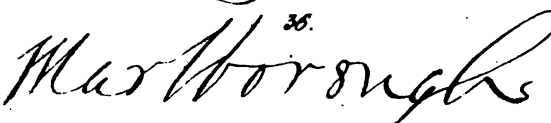
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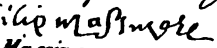
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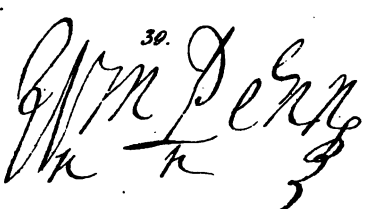


Massinger.

38.

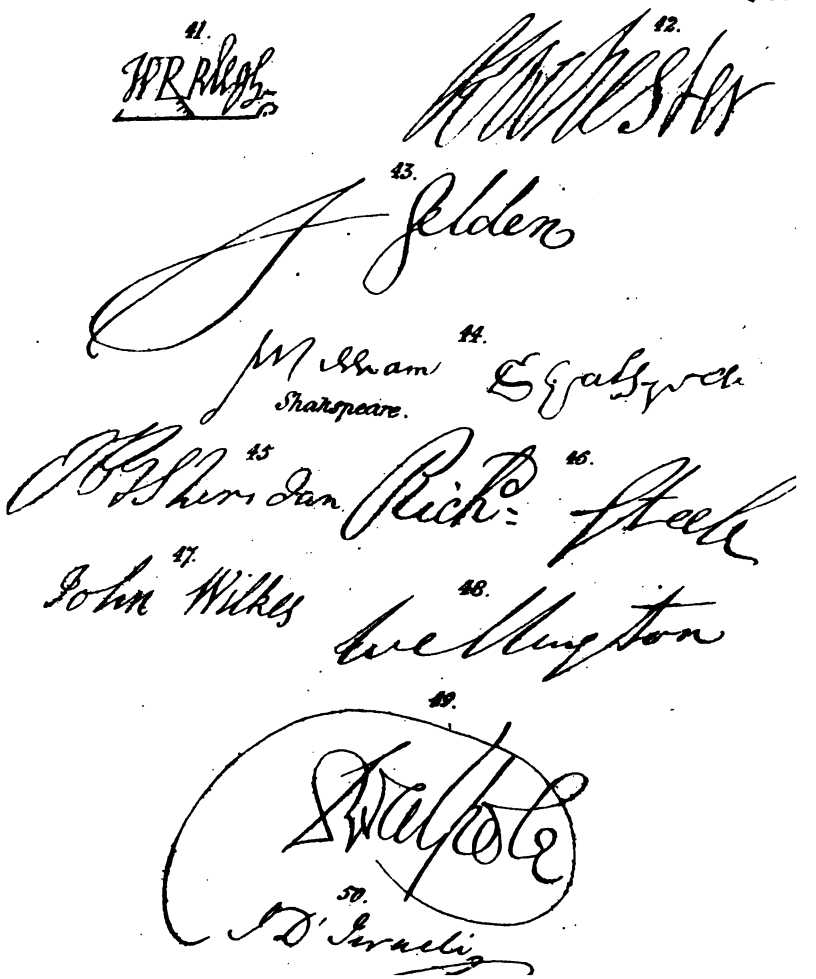


39.



40.




41.
W R Rlegh
42.
43.
J. Selden
44.
William Shakspeare.
45.
John Sheridan
46.
Rich: Steele
47.
John Wilkes
48.
49.
Walpole
50.
D'Israeli

no more form an opinion of a man from the mode of his wearing his face or his body, than I would from the shape, size, or colour of any article of his apparel. I have read of a person who took a pride in having *red* heels to his shoes, and who, notwithstanding this mark of the *petit maitre*, was one of the noblest-minded men of his age, and to tread in whose footsteps is still deemed a matter of honourable boast: I mean the late estimable Charles James Fox (No. 28). I knew personally another, John Wilkes (No. 47), who, though every inch a gentleman, looked less like one than any gentleman I ever saw.

A man's *actions*, on the contrary, convey in general, to the eye of intelligence, an idea of his character so clear and certain, as to preclude the chance of any

material delusion. Nor is this true of them only where they are on a scale calculated to develop fully the powers of the mind; for gleams of character will start forth from the very least of our actions—nay, from what is not commonly regarded as at all of the number, though otherwise spoken of by a great poet and judge of human nature:

> "Although *to write* be lesser than to do,
> It is the next deed, and a great one too."
>
> BEN JONSON.

Old Aspleen, who is himself as remarkable a commentary as walks the streets on the absurdity of all physiognomical conclusions,—possessing, under one of the meanest forms, an elevated mind and generous heart,—is so stanch a believer in this maxim of the poet, that he thinks

he can discover, in the mere character of a man's handwriting, a speedier insight into the character of his mind than by any other possible means. When any stranger comes recommended to his patronage, the cast of whose abilities he is desirous of ascertaining, his first request to him invariably is, "Show me your handwriting; for by that," as he whispers aside, "I shall tell to what tune your pulse beats." If you ask him to explain upon what principle he can, from so slight a matter, draw so important a conclusion, he does it in a few words, and with an air which shows that you have pleased him by the request. "In all other actions," he will say, "*some share* of guile and deception *may* lurk, which it requires penetration, experience, and skill to be able to detect; but in using his pen a man acts uncon-

sciously, as the current of his blood impels him; and there, at all times, nature flows unrestrained and free. Hence, in common language, we talk of finding out *what vein a man is in*, and that he has *got his wits at his finger-ends;* speaking like physiologists, without being aware of the secret truth to which we are paying homage. All that is necessary, then, is, to have studied the varieties of handwriting which different *veins of feeling* produce; in a careful comparison of these, and the deduction of correct general rules from them, the whole secret of the system rests. It is a sort of index, it must be confessed, not for every man's use. The key of it is in the hand of science alone, and not of all men of science; as any one may be satisfied who has read Lavater, or any of the numerous com-

mentators upon him, all rivalling their master in mere speciousness and conceit."

It was in a strain such as this, that Aspleen was one day expounding his theory to a party, at his friend Adjutant Overture's, when the adjutant, who has a troublesome knack of spoiling ingenious speculations, by always opposing some mere fact or other to them, stepped to a military chest (the respected memorial of other times) which stood in the corner of the room, and drawing from it a large roll of parchment, spread it out upon the table. "Here," said he, "is a list of the members of the volunteer association for the defence of the town and county of Ballyloughlin (of which you all know I had the honour of being captain and adjutant), and in which every

man's name is written with his own hand. Now, friend Aspleen, you that know men so well by their handwriting, pick me from this any dozen of names you please, but let them be the cleverest men of the regiment; else, Mr. Aspleen, you will give me leave to say, that your theory is not worth an old pike-staff."

All agreed that nothing could be fairer than this challenge—all but Aspleen himself, who sarcastically remarked, that "though these heroes of the town and county of Ballyloughlin might be proper enough men in their way, whom it might even be an honour to the adjutant to 'march through Coventry with,' it would be as absurd to think of pricking among them for either Marlboroughs or Eugenes, as it would be to expect to discover in their handwriting any thing to

distinguish them from the vulgar herd. Gentlemen," continued he, "you misconstrue the matter entirely: it is neither every man who understands this sort of criterion, nor is it every one to whom it has any sensible application. The great mass of people in the world may be said to consist of mere negatives; of persons who act as they are desired, think as they are taught, and *write after the copies set before them;* and the utmost that you can expect to discover from the handwriting of such persons is, that they have no individual character at all. The adjutant has put me at defiance with his Ballyloughlin squad; but if you wish to be convinced what virtue there really is in the character of men's handwriting, look at this."

Here Mr. Aspleen pulled from his

pocket a sheet of paper, covered with facsimiles of curious signatures.

"This," continued he, "is a collection of autographs, made by a friend in the Herald's College, but with no view to the theory of which we have been speaking. The only rule of selection followed was, that the parties should, for some quality or other, be persons *known to fame*."

A note of admiration from the adjutant, whose keen eye had by this time traversed every corner of the sheet, here interrupted the speaker. "And here," exclaimed he, with all the pride of an old soldier, "is Marlborough" (No. 36).

"Ay, Marlborough," resumed Aspleen, "and how much character is there! The fine and bold strokes alternating so happily, and the whole so firm, spacious,

and commanding! It bears the very impress of victory and power; no coward or fool ever could have written it.

"Let us see now whose signatures approach the nearest to it in character. Can you show me any that are more so than those of Oliver Cromwell (No. 8) and Sir Robert Walpole? (No. 49.) And were not these two kindred spirits? Cromwell's, you may observe, is somewhat blurred in one point; but, like the spot of blood observed on his cravat when he first made a figure in the House of Commons, it serves to remind one of the foul deed by which he arrived at the supreme power. In Walpole's, how strikingly has the writer added to a resolute and distinct, yet irregular character of writing, by the circular line which he has, with such evident deliberation, thrown

around the whole! It seems as if, in all the pride of premiership, he had said, 'And how much does not that include?'

"Mark next that signature: it is one of the age of Elizabeth, and to be of that age is singularly elegant, yet dashing and spirited withal. Could any thing be more characteristic of that ornament of chivalry and favourite of his queen, the gay and accomplished, but licentious Leicester? (No. 34.)

"Look, again, at the signature of his contemporary, Sir Walter Raleigh (No. 41); erect, bold, and clear-headed, it marks the man. It has the appearance, indeed, of being finically done, especially in the lower part. And who does not know that Raleigh, with all his great talents, was a fop in his attire; that he used to pride himself on his diamond

buckles; and made Leicester his mortal enemy, because he surpassed him one day at court in the number of feathers of *orange tawney* which he wore in his hat?

"So much, gentlemen, for generals and statesmen. Let us now see what philosophers there are in the group. Can you point me out any signatures more likely to denote a methodical, simplifying, and profound spirit, than those which do actually belong to two of the greatest masters of practical and speculative science,—Isaac Newton (No. 38) and John Locke? (No. 35).

"You would not rank Bolingbroke (No. 22) with these, for all his lines are too thin, wiry, and straggling; and he was, in fact, more of a Pyrrhonist than a philosopher; nor Selden (No. 43), on ac-

count of the immense I, which puts you in mind of his *Table-Talk;* nor William Penn (No. 39), every turn of whose writing is a deviation into some petty conceit; nor yet John Howard (No. 32), whose signature merely indicates the steady, straightforward progress of an intelligent English merchant, bent on an honourable pursuit.

"But why, you may ask, not rank with Newton his great coadjutor Robert Boyle? (No. 23). I must frankly confess that there is a degree of eccentricity about this signature, which seems to take it out of the class to which it ought to belong; unless you will allow it to be expressive of two very eccentric features in his philosophy; namely, that though a man of rank, in a profligate age, he cultivated the sciences; and, though a

man of science, he was a sincere and devout Christian."

At this sarcasm, the adjutant, who, though no philosopher, partakes a little of the learned shame of being religious, chose to laugh outright; but bade Aspleen "go on." It was amusing, he said, to hear him; although certes he talked great nonsense.

"Now, gentlemen," resumed Aspleen, "let us see how the *fine writers* of our language exercised their pens. There you have Dryden (No. 27), and Addison (No. 20), and Junius (No. 33), and Gibbon (No. 29); all of these signatures, you must confess, are specimens not only of fine writing, but, what is more, of the English style of fine writing. Dryden's, though that of his old age, vigorous and flowing as his St. Cecilia's Ode, one of

the latest of his productions; Addison's, simple, easy, unaffected; Gibbon's elaborately beautiful; but Junius's above all characteristic. You see there with what long and deliberate steps the 'great boar of the forest,' as Burke (No. 25) called him, stalks from letter to letter; and at last, in a bold '*us*,' dedicates his labours to the English nation."

"Ridiculous!" exclaimed the adjutant again.

"Singular, you mean," replied Aspleen, as, with undisturbed complacency, he thus proceeded: "Steele (No. 46), too, was one of our fine writers; but you may see in his signature what you may not discover in his compositions, that he was but too frequently *off the square*, dreaming, careless, and unsettled.

"In the long, thin, staggering lines of

Rochester (No. 42) we see *the rake* recorded in characters too plain to be possibly misinterpreted; and, by a casualty singular enough, the whole list contains no fitter companion to this signature than that of the next greatest rake in it, Richard Brinsley Sheridan (No. 45). Alas, poor Sheridan! You see there how a noble genius has, by a life of dissipation, been broken to pieces.

"Of the sportive yet manly character of Buckingham (No. 24), who that has read or witnessed *The Rehearsal* is ignorant? And who that looks at his signature can fail to recognise in it a man of a rich and copious vein, fond of *playing* with his pen, and given much to enlarging?

"Congreve's (No. 26) signature, too, is exactly what a reader might expect;—

open and broad-featured; and the characters strongly defined, with a few idle flourishes, but more original and happy turns.

" Mr. Pitt (No. 40) presents every stamp of the boy minister; and but a sorry contrast to the more masculine style of his rival, Charles James Fox (No. 28). The specimen here given of Pitt's writing, however, is evidently that of his very youth, and before his character could be fully formed; while Fox's signature is that of so mature a period of his age, as to betray but too many marks of those enervating habits which made him an early old man.

" Hogarth (No. 31) was something more than a painter; and his signature tells you as much. From its vigorous and original character, any one, who knew

nothing of the man, would pronounce him to have been one of the wise men of his day."

Aspleen here threw himself back in his chair, with the air of a man who thinks he has said more than enough to convince you of all that he maintains. The adjutant, however, always slow to yield where there is the least chance of escape, remarked that it was curious Mr. Aspleen had passed over wholly unnoticed the long series of kings, queens, and princesses, who came first in his way after the great Marlborough.

"Oh, as for them," said Aspleen, "the series is too long by far. Commonplace character, be assured, gentlemen, is as rife in palaces as elsewhere; and nothing could be more absurd than to suppose that every one in a royal line is

entitled to rank with individuals known to fame for something more than hereditary importance. Yet there are a few among them whose signatures are as characteristic as any I have yet noticed. Could the bloody persecutor Mary (No. 3), have possibly written in a style more stiff, precise, and determined? Or the bold and subtle Elizabeth (No. 4) in one more marked by double purposes and intricate windings, yet, in its general effect, so majestically clear and impressive? James I. (No. 5) we all know to have been a swaggerer and a coward; and what else do we see in his signature? He begins with an I distinct and tremendous; but ends with something so flustering and confused that, unless you knew the royal R ought to have been there, you never could have guessed it. The signa-

ture of the first Charles (No. 6) is, in its general design, extremely fair and pleasant; but you may observe some cross and awkward turns, and one or two *long stretches* very feebly executed. Could you expect less from that vein of character which lost this amiable prince his throne and his life? Compare, again, the signatures of his two sons. Can any one be at a moment's loss to determine which was the careless, roving, generous *Rowley* (No. 9), and which the royal monk (No. 10) who abdicated a throne to flog himself, in the monastery of La Trappe, for his sins? William, the hero of our glorious Revolution (No. 11), writes in a manner which shows remarkably to what *great lengths* some men will go; and yet there is a feebleness and want of management about it, which may con-

vince you that, had he not been an instrument in the hands of far abler men, he never could have seated himself on his father-in-law's throne. In the signatures of all the Georges (Nos. 14, 15, 16, 17), the same family features are predominant—determination, courage, perseverance, consistency. That of his present majesty, however, seems to indicate that we are getting into times when showy qualities are more thought of than sturdy ones. Nothing could be in stronger contrast with the short-rapier style of his great-grandfather than the long *peacock-tails* which ornament the signature of George IV." (No. 17.)

"Ay, ay," observed the adjutant, "all this, Mr. Aspleen, may be vastly fine and ingenious; but let me tell you that, showy as you pronounce the taste

of the present reign to be, it has brought more solid and lasting glory to the British arms than the reigns of all the other Georges together. For what are your Fontenoys, and Dettingens, and Mindens, to Waterloo? (No. 48.) So much, Mr. Aspleen, for your peacock-tails."

And so much, thought I, as I rose to take my departure, may be true; and yet fops be brave, and men in ball-dresses beat men in armour.

AUTOGRAPHS.

BY D'ISRAELI.

(*See Plate* 32, *No.* 50.)

THE art of judging of the characters of persons by their handwriting can only have any reality when the pen, acting without restraint, becomes an instrument guided by and indicative of the natural dispositions. But regulated as the pen is now too often by a mechanical process, which the present race of writing-masters seem to have contrived for their own convenience, a whole school exhibits a similar handwriting; the pupils are forced in their automatic motions, as if acted on

by the pressure of a steam-engine; a bevy of beauties will now write such facsimiles of each other, that in a heap of letters presented to the most sharp-sighted lover, to select that of his mistress—though, like Bassanio among the caskets, his happiness should be risked on the choice—he would despair of fixing on the right one, all appearing to have come from the same rolling-press. Even brothers of different tempers have been taught by the same master to give the same form to their letters, the same regularity to their line, and have made our handwritings as monotonous as are our characters in the present habits of society. The true physiognomy of writing will be lost among our rising generation: it is no longer a face that we are looking on, but a beautiful mask of a single pattern;

and the fashionable handwriting of our young ladies is like the former tight-lacing of their mothers' youthful days, when every one alike had what was supposed to be a fine shape!

Assuredly Nature would prompt every individual to have a distinct sort of writing, as she has given a peculiar countenance, a voice, and a manner. The flexibility of the muscles differs with every individual, and the hand will follow the direction of the thoughts and the emotions and the habits of the writers. The phlegmatic will portray his words, while the playful haste of the volatile will scarcely sketch them; the slovenly will blot and efface and scrawl, while the neat and orderly-minded will view themselves in the paper before their eyes. The merchant's clerk will not write like the law-

yer or the poet. Even nations are distinguished by their writing; the vivacity and variableness of the Frenchman, and the delicacy and suppleness of the Italian, are perceptibly distinct from the slowness and strength of pen discoverable in the phlegmatic German, Dane, and Swede. (See Lumley's large work on Autographs: Index for French, Italians, Germans, Danes, and Swedes.) When we are in grief we do not write as we should in joy. The elegant and correct mind, which has acquired the fortunate habit of a fixity of attention, will write with scarcely an erasure on the page, as Fenelon (Plate 20), and Gray (Plate 30), and Gibbon (ditto); while we find in Pope's manuscripts (see Lumley's *Autographiana*) the perpetual struggles of correction, and the eager and rapid interlinea-

tions struck off in heat. Lavater's notion of handwriting is by no means chimerical; nor was General Paoli fanciful, when he told Mr. Northcote that he had decided on the character and dispositions of a man from his letters and the handwriting.

Long before the days of Lavater, Shenstone, in one of his letters, said, " I want to see Mrs. Jago's handwriting, that I may judge of her temper." One great truth, however, must be conceded to the opponents of *the physiognomy of writing;* general rules only can be laid down. Yet the vital principle must be true, that the handwriting bears an analogy to the character of the writer, as all voluntary actions are characteristic of the individual. But many causes operate to counteract or obstruct this result. I am intimately acquainted with the handwrit-

ings of five of our great poets. The first in early life acquired among Scottish advocates a handwriting which cannot be distinguished from that of his ordinary brothers; the second, educated in public schools, where writing is shamefully neglected, composes his sublime or sportive verses in a schoolboy's ragged scrawl, as if he had never finished his tasks with the writing-master; the third writes his highly-wrought poetry in the common hand of a merchant's clerk, from early commercial avocations; the fourth has all that finished neatness which polishes his verses; while the fifth is a specimen of a full mind, not in the habit of correction or alteration; so that he appears to be printing down his thoughts without a solitary erasure. The hand-writing of the *first* and *third* poets, not indicative

of their character, we have accounted for; the others are admirable specimens of characteristic autographs.

Oldys, in one of his curious notes, was struck by the distinctness of character in the handwritings of several of our kings. He observed nothing further than the mere fact, and did not extend his idea to the art of judging of the natural character by the writing. Oldys has described these handwritings with the utmost correctness, as I have often verified. I shall add a few comments.

"Henry VIII. (Plate 26) wrote a strong hand, but as if he seldom had a good pen."—The vehemence of his character conveyed itself into his writing; bold, hasty, and commanding, I have no doubt the assertor of the Pope's supre-

macy and its triumphant destroyer split many a good quill.

" Edward VI. (Plate 26) wrote a fair legible hand."—We have this promising young prince's diary, written by his own hand; in all respects he was an assiduous pupil; and he had scarcely learnt to write and to reign when we lost him.

" Queen Elizabeth (Plates 9 and 26) writ an upright hand, like the bastard Italian."—She was, indeed, a most elegant caligrapher, whom Roger Ascham (Plate 29) had taught all the elegancies of the pen. The French editor has given the autograph of her name (see page 41), which she usually wrote in a very large tall character, and painfully elaborate. He accompanies it with one of the Scottish Mary (Plate 9), who at times wrote elegantly, though usually in uneven lines;

when in haste and distress of mind, in several letters during her imprisonment, which I have read, much the contrary.

" James I. (Plate 26) wrote a poor ungainly character, all awry, and not in a straight line."—James certainly wrote a slovenly scrawl, strongly indicative of that personal negligence which he carried into all the little things of life; and Buchanan, who had made him an excellent scholar, may receive the disgrace of his pupil's ugly scribble, which sprawls about his careless and inelegant letters.

" Charles I. (Plate 27) wrote a fair open Italian hand, and more correctly perhaps than any prince we ever had." —Charles was the first of our monarchs who intended to have domiciliated taste in the kingdom; and it might have been conjectured from this unfortunate prince,

who so finely discriminated the manners of the different painters, which are in fact their handwritings, that he would not have been insensible to the elegancies of the pen.

" Charles II. (Plate 27) wrote a little fair running hand, as if wrote in haste, or uneasy till he had done."—Such was the writing to have been expected from this illustrious vagabond, who had much to write, often in odd situations, and could never get rid of his natural restlessness and vicacity.

" James II. (Plate 27) writ a fair large hand."—It is characterised by his phlegmatic temper, as an exact detailer of occurrences, and the matter-of-business genius of the writer.

" Queen Anne (Plate 28) wrote a fair round hand,"—that is, the writing she

had been taught by her master, probably without any alteration of manner naturally suggested by herself—the copying-hand of a common character.

For other fuller specimens of each of these, see Lumley's large work on Autographs.

HINTS AS TO AUTOGRAPHS.

BY THE

RIGHT HONOURABLE SIR JOHN SINCLAIR, BART.

An interest is certainly excited by examining the manner in which persons distinguished for rank, science, or talent subscribe their names; and hence the anxiety felt by numbers for collecting franks. Some indeed have undertaken to judge of the character of an individual from his subscription; but to any general rule for that purpose there must be numerous exceptions. Some take a pleasure in the beauty or neatness of their signature; while others, for the purpose of

preventing forgery, ornament their names with such fantastic flourishes, that it is hardly possible to make them out. It is, however, singular that the plainest hands are those which it is most difficult to imitate.

It is a common but very ill-judged practice, to contract the Christian name. In questions before a court of justice, it may sometimes be difficult, where that mode is adopted, to prove the identity of a person, either subscribing a deed or witnessing the signature. J. Sinclair, for instance, might be John, James, Joseph, or Jacob Sinclair; and as in the course of any action at law, all doubt respecting the person who actually signed or witnessed a deed must be removed, additional evidence may be required to identify the signature.

Not long ago it was extremely fashionable to collect autographs; and a friend of mine, knowing the extensive correspondence I carried on, came all the way from Brighton to Edinburgh on purpose to get as many signatures as I could spare.

CHARACTERS IN WRITING.

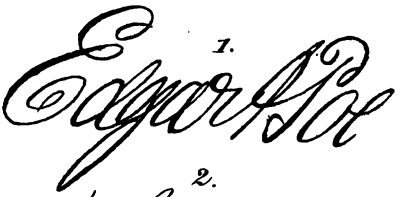
BY VIGNEUL MARVILLE.

THE characters of writing have followed the genius of the barbarous ages; they are well or ill-formed, in proportion as the sciences have flourished more or less. Antiquaries remark, that the medals struck during the consulship of Fabius Pictor, about 250 years before Augustus, have the letters better formed than those of an older date. Those of the time of Augustus, and of the following age, show characters of perfect beauty. Those of Diocletian and Maximian are worse

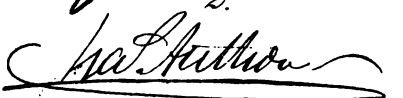
formed than those of the Antonines; and, again, those of the Justins and Justinians degenerate into a Gothic taste. But it is not to medals only that these remarks are applicable; we see the same inferiority of written characters generally following in the train of barbarism and ignorance. During the first race of our kings, we find no writing which is not a mixture of Roman and other characters. Under the empire of Charlemagne and of Louis le Débonnaire, the characters returned almost to the same point of perfection which characterised them in the time of Augustus, but in the following age there was a relapse to the former barbarism; so that for four or five centuries we find only the Gothic characters in manuscripts; for it is not worth while making an exception for some short

periods, which were somewhat more polished, and when there was less inelegance in the formation of the letters.

1.



2.



Chas. Anthon.

3.

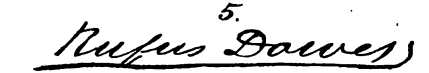


Park Benjamin.

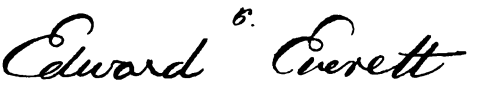
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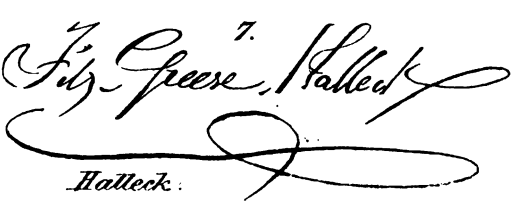
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6.



7.



Halleck.

THE AUTOGRAPH A TEST OF CHARACTER.

BY EDGAR A. POE.

See Plate 33 (*No.* 1).

MANY years ago it was our fortune to meet with a work, written by some speculative phrenologist, in which an attempt was made to combine every possible indication of mind or disposition into a single science. The author had pressed into his service phrenology, physiognomy, and temperament, with all of the physical indications of character so much discussed during the last century. But the most interesting—in fact, the most important

of all—was omitted. We refer to that afforded by handwriting.

No writer of modern times had pushed research to a greater extent, on this interesting subject of autography, than Edgar A. Poe. We are not prepared to speak of him as precisely the originator or inventor of the doctrine that character is indicated by handwriting, since, unless our memory deceives us, we have somewhere seen a work printed at London, during the reign of Charles II., in which the theory was distinctly enunciated; and Swedenborg, in speaking of the intuitive powers of perception peculiar to the inmates of a higher sphere, asserts that they can read the character of any mortal, not merely by his signature, but from the manner in which he draws a single line with a pen. The following remarks on

the handwriting and character of several of our American literati were written and published many years ago by the late Mr. Poe, but for some reason were omitted from the collected works of that ingenious and brilliant author.

Charles Anthon (No. 2), Professor of Columbia College, New York, is well known as the most erudite of our classical scholars; and although still a young man, there are few, if any, even in Europe, who surpass him in his peculiar path of knowledge. His chirography is the most regularly beautiful of any in our collection. We see the most scrupulous precision, finish, and neatness about every portion of it—in the formation of individual letters, as well as in the *tout-ensemble*. The perfect symmetry of the MS. gives it, to a casual glance, the ap-

pearance of Italic print. The lines are quite straight, and at exactly equal distances, yet are written without black rules or other artificial aid. There is not the slightest superfluity, in the way of flourish or otherwise, with the exception of the twirl in the C of the signature. Yet the whole is rather neat and graceful than forcible. Of four letters now lying before us, one is written on pink, one on a faint blue, one on green, and one on yellow paper—all of the finest quality. The seal is of green wax, with an impression of the head of Cæsar. It is in the chirography of such men as Professor Anthon that we look with certainty for indication of character. The scholar's life is seldom disturbed by those accidents which distort the natural disposition of the man of the world, preventing his real nature from

manifesting itself in his MS. The lawyer, who, pressed for time, is often forced to embody a world of heterogeneous memoranda on scraps of paper, with the stumps of all varieties of pen, will soon find the fair characters of his boyhood degenerate into hieroglyphics which would puzzle Dr. Wallis or Champollion; and from chirography so disturbed it is nearly impossible to decide any thing. In a similar manner, men who pass through many striking vicissitudes of life, acquire in each change of circumstance a temporary inflection of the handwriting; the whole resulting, after many years, in an unformed or variable MS., scarcely to be recognised by themselves from one day to the other. In the case of literary men generally, we may expect some decisive token of the mental influence upon the

MS.; and in the instance of the classical devotee, we may look with *especial* certainty for such token. We see, accordingly, in Professor Anthon's autography, each and all of the known idiosyncrasies of his taste and intellect. We recognise at once the scrupulous precision and finish of his scholarship and of his style—the love of elegance which prompts him to surround himself, in his private study, with gems of sculptural art, and beautifully bound volumes, all arranged with elaborate attention to form, and in the very pedantry of neatness. We perceive, too, the disdain of superfluous embellishment which distinguishes his compilations, and which gives to their exterior appearance so marked an air of Quakerism. We must not forget to observe that the "want of force" is a want as perceptible in the

whole character of the man as in that of the MS.

For the last six or seven years, few men have occupied a more desirable position among us than P. Benjamin (No. 3). As the editor of the *American Monthly Magazine*, of the *New-Yorker*, and more lately of the *Signal* and *New World*, he has exerted an influence scarcely second to that of any editor in the country. This influence Mr. B. owes to no single cause, but to his combined ability, activity, causticity, fearlessness, and independence. His MS. is not very dissimilar to Mr. Irving's; and, like his, it has no doubt been greatly modified by the excitements of life, and by the necessity of writing much and hastily; so that we can predicate but little respecting it. It speaks of his exquisite sensibility and passion. These

betray themselves in the nervous variation of the MS. as the subject is diversified. When the theme is an ordinary one, the writing is legible and has force; but when it verges upon any thing which may be supposed to excite, we see the characters falter as they proceed. In the MSS. of some of his best poems this peculiarity is very remarkable. The signature conveys the idea of his *usual* chirography.

Mr. Bryant's MS. (No. 4) puts us entirely at fault. It is one of the most commonplace clerk's hands which we ever encountered, and has no character about it beyond that of the day-book and ledger. He writes, in short, what mercantile men and professional penmen call a fair hand, but what artists would term an abominable one. Among its regular up-and-down strokes, waving lines and hair

lines, systematic taperings and flourishes, we look in vain for the force, polish, and decision of the poet. The *picturesque*, to be sure, is equally deficient in his chirography and in his poetical productions.

Mr. Dawes (No. 5) has been long known as a poet; but his claims are scarcely yet settled—his friends giving him rank with Bryant and Halleck, while his opponents treat his pretensions with contempt. He seems to have been infected with a blind admiration of Coleridge, especially of his mysticism and cant.

Mr. Everett's MS. (No. 6) is a noble one. It has about it an air of deliberate precision emblematic of the statesman, and a mingled grace and solidity betokening the scholar. Nothing can be more legible, and nothing need be more

uniform. The man who writes thus will never grossly err in judgment, or otherwise; but we may also venture to say that he will never attain the loftiest pinnacle of renown.

Mr. Halleck's hand (No. 7) is strikingly indicative of his genius. We see in it some force, more grace, and little of the picturesque. There is a great deal of freedom about it; and his MSS. seem to be written *currente calamo*, but without hurry. His flourishes, which are not many, look as if thoughtfully planned, and deliberately yet firmly executed. His paper is very good, and of a bluish tint; his seal of red wax.

The MS. of Mr. Irving (No. 8) has little about it indicative of his genius. Certainly, no one could suspect from it any nice *finish* in the writer's composi-

8.

Washington Irving

9.

John P. Kennedy

10.

Henry W. Longfellow

11.

J. H. Sigourney

12.

W. Gilmore Simms

W. Gilmore Simms.

13.

Robert Walsh

14.

N. P. Willis

tions; nor is this nice finish to be found. The letters now before us vary remarkably in appearance; and those of late date are not nearly so well written as the more antique. Mr. Irving has travelled much, has seen many vicissitudes, and has been so thoroughly satiated with fame as to grow slovenly in the performance of his literary tasks. This slovenliness has affected his handwriting. But even from his earlier MSS. there is little to be gleaned except the ideas of simplicity and precision. It must be admitted, however, that this fact, in itself, is characteristic of the literary manner, which, however excellent, has no prominent or very remarkable features.

Mr. Kennedy (No. 9) is well known as the author of *Swallow Barn*, *Horse-Shoe Robinson*, and *Rob of the Bowl;* three

works whose features are strongly and decidedly marked. These features are, boldness and force of thought (disdaining ordinary embellishment, and depending for its effect upon masses rather than upon details), with a predominant *sense of the picturesque* pervading and giving colour to the whole. His *Swallow Barn* in especial (and it is by the first effort of an author that we form the truest idea of his mental bias) is but a rich succession of picturesque still-life pieces. Mr. Kennedy is well to do in the world, and has always taken the world easily. We may therefore expect to find in his chirography, if ever in any, a full indication of the chief feature of his literary style, especially as this chief feature is so remarkably prominent. A glance at his signature will convince any one that the

indication *is* to be found. A painter called upon to designate the main peculiarity of his MS., would speak at once of the *picturesque*. . This character is given it by the absence of hair strokes, and by the abrupt termination of every letter without tapering: so in great measure by varying the size and also slope of the letters. Great uniformity is preserved in the whole air of the MS., with great variety in the constituent parts. Every character has the clearness, boldness, and precision of a wood-cut. The long letters do not rise or fall in an undue degree above the others. Upon the whole, this is a hand which pleases us much, although its *bizarrerie* is rather too piquant for the general taste. Should its writer devote himself more exclusively to light letters, we predict his future eminence. The

paper on which our epistles are written is very fine, clear, and *white*, with gilt edges. The seal is neat, and just sufficient wax has been used for the impression. All this betokens a love of the elegant without effeminacy.

H. W. Longfellow, Professor of Moral Philosophy at Harvard (No. 10), is entitled to the first place among the poets of America. His good qualities are all of the highest order, while his sins are chiefly those of affectation and imitation —an imitation sometimes verging on downright theft. His MS. is remarkably good, and is fairly exemplified in the signature. We see here plain indications of the force, vigour, and glowing richness of his literary style, the deliberate and steady *finish* of his compositions. The man who writes thus may not accomplish

much, but what he does will always be thoroughly done. The main beauty, or at least one great beauty of his poetry, is that of *proportion*; another is a freedom from extraneous embellishment. He oftener runs into affectation through his endeavours at simplicity, than through any other cause. Now this rigid simplicity and proportion are easily perceptible in the MS., which altogether is a very excellent one.

Mrs. Sigourney (No. 11) seems to take much pains with her MSS. Apparently she employs "black lines." Every *t* is crossed, and every *i* dotted with precision, while the punctuation is faultless. Yet the whole has nothing of effeminacy or formality. The individual characters are large, well and freely formed, and preserve a perfect uniformity through-

out; a perfect regularity exists, and the style is *formed* or *decided*. From her writing we might easily form a true estimate of her compositions. Freedom, dignity, precision, and grace, without originality, may be properly attributed to her. She has fine taste, without genius. Her paper is usually good; the seal small, of green and gold wax, and without impression.

Mr. Simms (No. 12) is the author of *Martin Faber* and other productions. As a poet, indeed, we like him far better than as a novelist. His qualities in this respect *resemble* those of Mr. Kennedy, although he equals him in no particular, except in his appreciation of the graceful. In his sense of beauty he is Mr. K.'s superior, but falls behind him in force, and the other attributes of the author of *Swal-*

low Barn. These differences and resemblances are well shown in the MS. That of Mr. S. has more slope, and more uniformity in detail, with less in the mass; while it has also less of the picturesque, although still much. The middle name is Gilmore; in the print it looks like Gilmere.

Mr. Walsh's MS. (No. 13) is peculiar from its large, sprawling, and irregular appearance—rather rotund than angular. It always seems to have been hurriedly written. The *t*'s are crossed with a sweeping scratch of the pen, which gives to his epistles a somewhat droll appearance. A *dictatorial* air pervades the whole. His paper is of ordinary quality. His seal is commonly of brown wax mingled with gold, and bears a Latin motto, of which only the words *fraus* and *mortuus* are le-

gible. Mr. Walsh cannot be denied talent; but his reputation, which has been bolstered into being by a clique, is not a thing to live. A blustering self-conceit betrays itself in his chirography, which, upon the whole, is not very dissimilar to that of Mr. E. Everett.

Mr. Willis (No. 14), when writing carefully, would write a hand nearly resembling that of Mr. Halleck, although no similarity is perceptible in the signatures. His usual chirography is dashing, free, and not ungraceful, but is sadly deficient in force and picturesqueness. It has been the fate of this gentleman to be alternately condemned *ad infinitum*, and lauded *ad nauseam*—a fact which speaks much in his praise. We know of no American writer who has evinced greater versatility of talent—that is to say

of high talent, often amounting to genius; and we know of none who has more narrowly missed placing himself at the head of our letters. The paper of Mr. Willis's epistle is always very fine and glossy.

For about 300 *autographs of celebrated Americans, see Lumley's larger work.*

OF DESIGN, COLOURING, AND WRITING.

BY THE REV. JOHN CASPAR LAVATER.

(*Plate* 34.)

"HUMAN nature presents neither real contrast, nor manifest contradiction." This is a truth which we run no risk in laying down as a principle; and it is apparent that the greater progress we make in the study of man, the more generally received this proposition will be.

This, at least, is positive, that no one part of our body is contradictory to or destroys another. They are all in the most intimate union, subordinate to one another, animated by one and the same

spirit. Each preserves the nature and the temperament of the other; and even though, in this respect, they may vary less or more in their effects, they will all, however, approach to the character of the whole. Nature composes not by piecemeal; her totality and homogeneity will ever be inimitable, and never cease to set art at defiance;—she creates and forms all at a single cast. The arm produces the hand, and this, again, sends forth the fingers;—a truth the most palpable, a truth which constitutes one of the principal foundations of physiognomy, and which attests the universal signification of every thing pertaining to our physical essence; a truth whose evidence, hitherto not sufficiently felt, seems reserved for future ages. It is this: "That a single member well constituted, a single de-

tached and exact contour, furnishes us with certain inductions for the rest of the body, and consequently for the whole character." This truth appears to me as evident as that of my existence; it is irresistibly certain. As Nature, in her universality, is a reflex of her infinite and eternal Author, in like manner she also reappears the same in all her productions; it is always the same image, reduced, coloured, and shaded, a thousand and a thousand different ways. There is but one only section proper to every circle and to every parabola, and that section alone assists us in completing the figure. Thus we find the Creator in the least of his creatures, Nature in the smallest of her productions, and each production in each of the parts or sections which compose it.

What I have said of physical may likewise be applied to moral man. Our instincts, our faculties, our propensities, our passions, our actions, differ from one another, and yet they have all a resemblance; they are not contradictory, however opposite they may frequently appear; they are conspirators, leagued together by indissoluble bonds. If contrasts result from this, it is only externally and in the effects; these will sometimes scarcely be able to subsist together, but they do not the less, on that account, proceed from one common source.

I shall not stop further to unfold this idea, nor to support it by proofs. Sure of my thesis, I pursue it, and deduce from it the following consequences.

All the motions of our body receive their modification from the temperaments

and the character. The motion of the sage is not that of the idiot; there is a sensible difference in the deportment and gait of the choleric and phlegmatic, of the sanguine and melancholic. It is Sterne, I think, or Bruyere, who says, " The wise man takes his hat from the peg very differently from the fool.

Of all the bodily motions none are so much varied as those of the hand and fingers.

And of all the motions of the hands and fingers, the most diversified are those which we employ in writing. The least word communicated to paper, how many points, how many curves, does it not contain!

It is further evident that every picture, that every detached figure, and, to the eye of the observer and the connoisseur,

every trait, preserves and recalls the character of the painter.

Every designer and every painter reproduces himself, more or less, in his works; you discover in them either something of his exterior or of his mind, as we shall presently show by the examples of several artists. Compare, in the meantime, Raphael and Chodoweiki, Le Brun and Callot, George Pens and John de Luycken, Van Dyk and Holbein; and among engravers, Drevet and Houbracken, Wille and Van Schuppen, Edelinck and Goltzius, Albert Durer and Lucas of Leyden;—on bringing them close to each other, you will be immediately convinced that each has a style peculiar to himself, and which is in harmony with his personal character.

Compare a print of Wille's with one

of Schmidt's, examine them closely, you will not find a single stroke precisely the same, and whose character is perfectly identical in both.

Let a hundred painters, let all the scholars of the same master, draw the same figure; let all these copies have the most striking resemblance to the original; they will, notwithstanding, have each a particular character,—a tint and a touch which shall render them distinguishable.

It is astonishing to what a degree the personality of artists reappears in their style and in their colouring. All painters, designers, and engravers, who have fine hair, almost always excel in this particular; and such of them as formerly wore a long beard never failed to present, in their pictures, figures adorned with a ve-

nerable beard, which they laboured with the utmost care. A reflected comparison of several eyes and hands, drawn by the same master, will frequently enable us to judge of the colour of the artist's eyes and of the form of his hands: Van Dyk exhibits a proof of it. In all the works of Rubens you see the spirit of his own physiognomy piercing through; you discover his vast and productive genius, his bold and rapid pencil, unfettered by a scrupulous exactness; you perceive that he applied himself in preference, and from taste, to the colouring of his flesh and to elegance of drapery. Raphael took peculiar pleasure in perfecting his outlines. The same warmth and the same simplicity predominate in all the pictures of Titian; the same impassioned style in those of Corregio. If you pay ever so

little attention to the colouring of Holbein, it will hardly be possible for you to doubt that his own complexion was a very clear brown; Albert Durer's was probably yellowish; and that of Largilliere a bright red. These perceptions certainly merit a serious examination.

If we are under the necessity of admitting a characteristic expression in painting, why should it entirely disappear in drawings, and in figures traced on paper? Is not the diversity of handwriting generally acknowledged? And in trials for forgery, does it not serve as a guide to our courts towards the discovery of truth? It follows, then, that it is supposed to be highly probable that each of us has his own handwriting, individual and inimitable, or which, at least, cannot be counterfeited but with extreme difficulty, and

very imperfectly. The exceptions are too few to subvert the rule.

And is it possible that this incontestable diversity of writing should not be founded on the real difference of moral character?

It will be objected, "That the same man, who has, however, but one and the same character, is able to diversify his handwriting without end." To this I answer, "That the man in question, notwithstanding his equality of character, acts, or at least frequently appears to act, in a thousand and a thousand different manners." And nevertheless his actions, the most varied, constantly retain the same impress, the same colour. The gentlest spirit may suffer himself to be transported with passion; but his anger is always peculiar to himself, and never that

of another. Place in his situation persons either more fiery or more calm than he is, and the transport will no longer be the same. His anger is in proportion to the degree of gentleness which is natural to him. In his moments of rage his blood will preserve the same mixture as when he is tranquil, and will never ferment like the blood of the choleric; he will have neither the nerves, nor the sensibility, nor the irritability, which constitute the temperament, and characterise the excesses, of a violent man. All these distinctions may be applied to handwritings. Just as a gentle spirit may occasionally give way to transports of passion, in like manner also the finest penman may sometimes acquit himself carelessly; but even then, his writing will have a character totally different from the scrawl

of a person who always writes badly. You will distinguish the beautiful hand of the first, even in his most indifferent performance; while the most careful production of the second will always savour of his scribbling.

Be this as it may, this diversity of handwriting of one and the same person, far from overturning my thesis, only confirms it; for hence it results that the present disposition of mind has an influence on the writing. With the same ink, the same pen, and on the same paper, the same man will form his letters very differently when treating a disagreeable subject, and when agreeably amusing himself with a friendly correspondence. Is it not undoubtedly true, that the form and exterior of a letter frequently enable us to judge whether it was written in a

calm or uneasy situation, in haste or at leisure? whether its author is a person of solidity or levity, lively or dull? Is not the handwriting of most females more lax and unsteady than that of men? The more I compare the different handwritings that fall in my way, the more I am confirmed in the idea that they are so many expressions, so many emanations, of the character of the writer. What renders my opinion still more probable is, that every nation, every country, every city, has its peculiar handwriting, just as they have a physiognomy and a form peculiar to themselves. All who carry on a foreign literary correspondence of any extent, are able to justify this remark. The intelligent observer will go still farther, and will judge beforehand of the character of his correspondent from the

address only—I mean the handwriting of the address, for the style in which it is conceived supplies indications still much more positive—nearly as the title of a book frequently discovers to us somewhat of the author's turn of mind.

There is, therefore, a national handwriting, just as there are national physiognomies, each of which retraces something of the character of the nation, and each of which, at the same time, differs from another. The same thing takes place with respect to the scholars of the same writing-master. They will all write a similar hand, and yet every one of them will blend something of a manner proper to himself—a tint of his individuality; rarely will he confine himself to an imitation completely servile.

"But, with the finest hand," I shall be

told, " with the most regular handwriting, the man is frquently, to the last degree, irregular." Raise as many objections as you please, this fine writing, however, necessarily supposes a certain mental arrangement, and in particular, the love of order. The best preachers are often the most lax in both principle and conduct; but were they entirely corrupted, they could not be good preachers. Besides, I am perfectly assured that they would be still more eloquent, if, according to the precept of the Gospel, their actions corresponded with their words. In order to write a fine hand, one must have, at least, a vein of energy, of industry, of precision, and taste; as every effort supposes a cause analogous to it. But those persons whose writing is so beautiful and so elegant would perhaps improve it still fur-

ther were their mind more cultivated and adorned.

It is beyond all doubt, it is incontestable, that the handwriting is the criterion of regularity, of taste, and of propriety. But what is more problematical, and yet appears to me no less true, is, that to a certain degree it is likewise the indication of talents, of intellectual faculties, and of the moral character inseparable from them —because it very frequently discovers the actual dispositions of the writer.

Let us recapitulate. I distinguish in writing:

The substance and body of the letters.

Their form and the manner of rounding.

Their height and length.

Their position.

Their connection.

The interval which separates them.

The interval between the lines.

Whether these last are straight or awry.

The fairness of the writing.

Its lightness or heaviness.

If all this is found in perfect harmony, it is by no means difficult to discover, with tolerable precision, somewhat of the fundamental character of the writer.

I suggest one idea more, which I leave to the consideration of those who may be, like me, struck with it. I have remarked, in most instances, a wonderful analogy between the language, the gait, and the handwriting.

Plate 35.

1. Monsieur Lavate

2. Monsieur Lavate

3. Monsieur J. C. Lavater

4. Monsieur Lavater

5. Monsieur Lavater

6. Monsieur Lavater Ministre

7. Monsieur Lavater Ministre

8. Monsieur Lavater Ministre

9. Monsieur Jean Caspar

PLATE 35.

See also Plates 21 and 22.

Of all these hands,

1 announces the least vivacity.

2 promises much order, precision, and taste.

In 3 there is still more precision and firmness, but perhaps less spirit.

4 discovers a slight, uncertain, and fluctuating character.

5 fire and caprice.

6 delicacy and taste.

7 activity and penetration.

8 bears the impress of genius;

and 9 The Writer even more highly gifted.

FINIS.

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